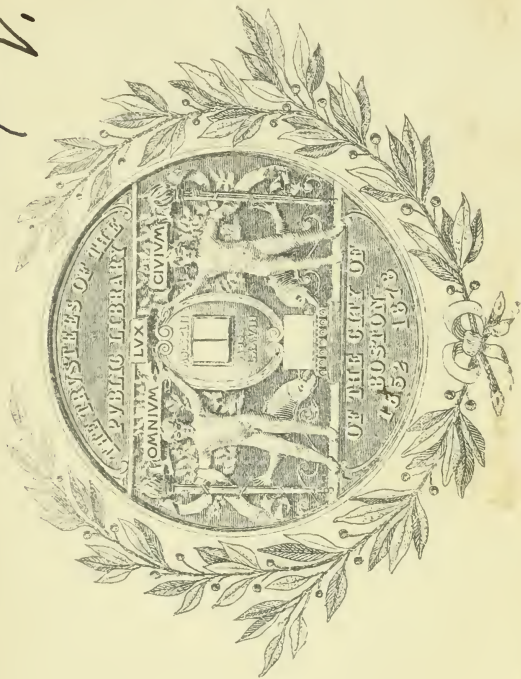




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*Rev. D. D. Williams.*



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I N S T I T U T E S  
O F  
N A T U R A L and R E V E A L E D  
R E L I G I O N.

V O L. I.

C O N T A I N I N G

The Elements of NATURAL RELIGION ;

To which is prefixed,

An Essay on the best Method of communicating  
religious Knowledge to the Members of Christian  
Societies.

---

BY JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, LL. D. F.R.S.

---

*Wisdom is the principal Thing.*

SOLOMON.

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L O N D O N :

Printed for J. JOHNSON, No. 72, in St. Paul's  
Church-Yard, M D C C L X X I I.

Another in

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Mrs. J. S. W. Williams

337, 782

Nov. 13, 1883

TO THE YOUNGER PART OF THE  
CONGREGATION OF PROTES-  
TANT DISSENTERS AT MILL-  
HILL, IN LEEDS.

*My young friends,*

**I**T was on your account that I com-  
posed these *Institutes of natural  
and revealed religion*, and to you I  
take the liberty to dedicate them.

It is the earnest wish of my heart,  
that your minds may be well esta-  
blished in the sound principles of  
*religious knowledge*, because I am ful-  
ly persuaded, that nothing else can  
be a sufficient foundation of a virtu-  
ous and truly respectable conduct in  
life, or of good hope in death. A

mind destitute of knowledge (and, comparatively speaking, no kind of knowledge, besides that of *religion*, deserves the name) is like a field on which no culture has been bestowed, which, the richer it is, the ranker weeds it will produce. If nothing good be sown in it, it will be occupied by plants that are useless or noxious.

Thus the mind of man can never be wholly barren. Through our whole lives we are subject to successive impressions; for, either new ideas are continually flowing in, or traces of the old ones are marked deeper. If therefore, you be not acquiring good principles, be assured that you are acquiring bad ones; if you be not forming virtuous habits, you are, how insensibly soever to your selves, forming vicious ones; and, instead  
of



of becoming those amiable objects in yourselves, and those valuable members of society, which nature, and the God of nature intended that you should be, you will be at best, useless *cumberers of the ground*, a dead weight upon the community, receiving support and advantage, but contributing nothing in return ; or you will be the pests of society, growing continually more corrupt yourselves, and contributing to the corruption of others.

Finding yourselves, therefore, in such a world as this, in which nothing is at a stand, it behoves you seriously to reflect upon your situation and prospects. Form, then, the generous resolution (and every thing depends upon your resolution) of being at present what you will certainly wish you had been some years



hence, what your best friends wish you to be, and what your maker has intended, fitted, and enabled you to be.

Above all things, be careful to improve and make use of the *reason* which God has given you, to be the guide of your lives, to check the extravagance of your passions, and to assist you in acquiring that *knowledge*, without which your rational powers will be of no advantage to you. If you would distinguish yourselves as *men*, and attain the true dignity, and proper happiness of your natures, it must be by the exercise of those faculties which are peculiar to you as men. If you have no higher object than the gratification of your animal appetites and passions, you rank yourselves with the *brute beasts*; but, as you will still retain that *reflection*,  
which

which they have not, you will never have that unallayed enjoyment of a sensual life which they have. In fact, you are incapable of the happiness of brute animals. Aspire, therefore, to those superior pursuits and gratifications for which you were formed, and which are the prerogative and glory of your natures.

Let me urge you, my younger hearers, to a more than ordinary attention to regularity and propriety of behaviour, becoming men and christians, that your conduct may be no disgrace to the *rational and liberal sentiments*, which I trust you have imbibed. Let it be seen, that when God is considered as the proper object of reverence, love, and confidence, as the benevolent Father of all his offspring of mankind, and their righteous and impartial moral governor,

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nor, the principle of obedience is the most ingenuous and effectual. Cherish the most unfeigned gratitude to the *Father of lights*, that your minds are no longer bewildered with the gloom and darkness, in which our excellent religion was, for so many ages, involved ; but let this consideration be a motive with you to walk as becomes so glorious a light. If your conduct be such as, instead of recommending your own generous principles, furnishes an excuse to others, for acquiescing in their prejudices and errors, all the dishonour which is thereby thrown upon God, and the injury which will be done to the pure religion of Jesus Christ, by keeping it longer in a corrupted state at home, and preventing its propagation abroad, will be your peculiar guilt, and greatly aggravate your condemnation.

Value

Value the *scriptures*, as a treasury of divine knowledge, consisting of books which are eminently calculated to inspire you with just sentiments, and prompt you to right conduct; and consider them also as the only proper *authority in matters of faith*.

In a thing so interesting to you as the business of *religion*, affecting the regulation of your conduct here, so as to prepare you for immortal happiness hereafter, respect no *human authority* whatever. Submit to those who are invested with the supreme power in your country, as your lawful *civil magistrates*; but if they would prescribe to you in *matters of faith*, say that you have but one *Father even God*, and one *Master even Christ*, and *stand fast in the liberty with which he has made you free*. Respect a *parliamentary king*, and cheerfully pay all

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*parliamentary*



*parliamentary taxes* ; but (with a respectable member of the British house of Commons, in the debate relating to the act of William and Mary, which makes it confiscation of goods and imprisonment for life, to deny the doctrine of the Trinity) have nothing to do with a *parliamentary religion*, or a *parliamentary God*.

*Religious rights*, and *religious liberty*, are things of inestimable value. For these have many of our ancestors suffered and died ; and shall we, in the sunshine of prosperity, desert that glorious cause, from which no storms of adversity or persecution could make them swerve. Let us consider it as a duty of the first rank with respect to moral obligation, to transmit to our posterity, and to provide, as far as we can, for transmitting, unimpaired, to the latest generations, that generous  
zeal

zeal for religion and liberty, which makes the memory of our forefathers so truly illustrious.

Solong as it shall please that God, in whose hands our breath is, and whose are all our ways, to continue me in that relation, in which I think myself happy in standing to you at present, I trust that I shall not fail to endeavour to impress your minds with a just sense of what you owe to God, to your country, and to mankind. Let it be our mutual care to derive the most durable advantage from our present temporary connection, by growing continually more *established, strengthened, and settled*, in the habit and practice of all the virtues which become us as men and as christians; that we may secure a happy meeting, and mutual congratula-

tion in the future kingdom of our Lord and Saviour.

I am,

My young friends,

with affection and esteem,

your brother, and servant,

in the gospel of Jesus Christ,

JOSEPH PRIESTLEY.

*Leeds, March, 1772.*



# THE PREFACE.

**N**O branch of knowledge can be taught to advantage except in a regular, or systematical method. It is also very convenient, both for the teacher and the learner, to have the *elements* of any science drawn up in a succinct manner; by the help of which the one may be directed in what order to explain the several branches of it, and the other may see at one view all its constituent parts, in their natural connection, and thereby gain the most comprehensive and distinct idea of the whole, which is also a great advantage for retaining it in memory.

It was with a view to the instruction of youth that the following *Institutes* were composed, and nothing more was meant, originally, than to furnish myself with an easy method of discoursing upon the subjects of natural and revealed religion to the  
young

young men of my own congregation, whom I formed into a class for that purpose. But when I was induced to publish them, for the benefit of others, I made them a little fuller, that those young persons who can have little or no assistance in their inquiries, might be able to read them with tolerable advantage. I shall think myself happy if this *manual* be the means of establishing any of the youth of the present age in the sound knowledge of those most important subjects to which it is appropriated. I am satisfied that no man can write, or live, to better purpose.

As my sole view in this short system was to teach the elements of religious knowledge to persons intended for *common and civil life*, and not for any of the learned professions, I have avoided, as much as I possibly could, those metaphysical and abstruse speculations, which have been raised from every branch of my subject, and have chiefly confined myself to such considerations as are most adapted to produce conviction in the minds of those

those who are not much used to close reflection ; and I have endeavoured through the whole to express myself with the greatest clearness and precision. For this purpose I have been obliged to depart considerably from the plan of any treatise that I have yet seen upon these subjects.

I am far, however, from being able to promise that I shall leave these subjects free from all obscurity. The mind of man will never be able to contemplate the being, perfections, and providence of God without meeting with inexplicable difficulties. We may find sufficient reason for acquiescing in the darkness which involves these great subjects, but we must never expect to see them set in a perfectly clear light. But notwithstanding this, we may know enough of the divine being, and of his moral government to make us much better and happier beings than we could be without such knowledge ; and even the consideration of the insuperable difficulties referred to above is not without its use, as it tends to impress the mind  
with

with sentiments of reverence, humility, and submission.

I have also had another view in not chusing to conceal some of the great difficulties which attend the demonstration, if not of the *being*, yet of the most essential *attributes*, and moral *government* of God. It was that the consideration of them might make us more sensible of the value of *revelation*, by which many of them are, in a great measure, cleared up, and by which great light has been thrown upon every important branch of natural religion.

Many unbelievers avail themselves very much of the *diversity of opinions* which prevails among the professors of revealed religion, and boast of the great *clearness*, as well as *sufficiency of the light of nature* ; but the case is much otherwise; and there have been, in fact, among men of the greatest learning and acuteness of thought, believers and unbelievers in revelation, as great a diversity of opinion with respect to the principles of natural, as of revealed religion.;



religion ; and notwithstanding the various sentiments of christians, they are all perfectly agreed, and unanimous, with respect to all the most important doctrines of natural religion, concerning which unbelievers in revelation have never been able to arrive at any certainty, or uniformity of opinion ; so that men who think at all are very far from getting rid of any real difficulty by abandoning revelation. Nay the difficulties which we shall find upon this subject among christians, though I shall not fail to state them with the greatest fairness, suppressing nothing that can contribute to their strength, are by no means so embarrassing to the mind of man, as those which occur in the contemplation of nature.

If any person, discouraged by these difficulties, should think to relieve himself by rejecting *all religion*, 'natural and revealed, he will find, if he reflect at all, that he has miserably deceived himself, and that he is involved in greater perplexity than ever ; the scheme he has adopted  
not

not only filling his mind with great darkness and distress, but being contrary to some of the plainest appearances in nature, and therefore manifestly irrational and absurd. In this case, therefore, true philosophy will lead a man to acquiesce in that scheme of principles which is attended with the fewest difficulties, without expecting to meet with any that is quite free from them; and a good man will be drawn by a strong propensity to embrace that system, the contemplation and influence of which will tend to make him, and his brethren of mankind, most virtuous and happy. This important circumstance will always operate as an evidence for the truth of natural and revealed religion, on minds which are not perverted by sophistry, or vice.

In the second and third parts of these Institutes, which relate to the duty and final expectations of mankind, it will be seen that I have made great use of *Dr. Hartley's observations on man*. To this writer I think myself happy in having any fair opportunity of making my acknowledgements,  
and

and I shall think that a very valuable end will be gained, if, by this or any other means, a greater degree of attention could be drawn upon that most excellent performance, so as to make it more generally read, and studied, by those who are qualified to do it. I do not know any thing that is better adapted to make an impression upon truly philosophical minds than the sketch that he has given of the evidences of christianity, in his second volume; and for this reason I should be exceedingly glad to see that part of his work published separately.

**AN**





AN ESSAY ON THE BEST METHOD OF COMMUNICATING RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE TO THE MEMBERS OF CHRISTIAN SOCIETIES.

THE superficial knowledge, or rather the extreme ignorance of the generality of youth in the present age, with respect to religion, is the subject of great and just complaint; and for want of being well established in the principles of *rational religion*, many of them are daily falling a prey to *enthusiasm* on one hand, and *infidelity* on the other. In this life we must not expect any good without some attendant evil. The circumstance of which we now complain has been, in part, the natural effect of the moderation of the present times, in which no person is even questioned about his religion. For as the subject is never canvassed, nor so much as started in polite company, no person thinks it

it worth his while to prepare himself for making any reply, and consequently the youth of this age never professedly study the subject, or ever give more than an occasional and cursory attention to it.

Another source of this complaint is the little care that is now taken by parents in the religious instruction of their children. They condemn the severity with which they recollect that they themselves were treated, and, not considering the advantage which they derive from it, exclaim against such excessive rigour and austerity, and throw off not only the *tutor*, but almost the *master* too with respect to their children; not recollecting that, after this, there is little left of the *parent* that is truly valuable. To this conduct they are, no doubt, at the same time, secretly influenced by a regard to their own ease; for upon the present fashionable plan, a person gives himself very little trouble indeed about forming the minds of his offspring; and some may think that they have sufficiently done their duty in this respect,  
when

when they have provided them with *masters*, to superintend their education in general.

Many persons will not readily adopt my sentiments relating to this subject. For my own part, however, I have not the least doubt, but that, though the maxims of our forefathers may have been too strict, we of the present age are already far gone in another extreme, opposite to theirs, and much more dangerous. Their method, by restraining the inclinations of youth, might (though, perhaps, upon the whole, it might not) diminish the happiness of that early period of life; and in some instances, I doubt not, the excessive restraints they were under might serve to inflame their passions, and prepare them for the more unbounded and criminal indulgence of them, when they became their own masters; but, in general, habits of sobriety and moderation were, by this means, effectually formed, and a disposition to licentiousness intirely precluded.

On the contrary, our greater indulgence to youth gives them more *liberty*, but, perhaps, not more real *enjoyment* even of early life ; but whatever good effect this conduct may have upon some ingenuous tempers, I am satisfied that, in general, it is fatal to virtue and happiness through life. Our youth having had little or no restraint put upon their inclinations, and religious principles not having been sufficiently inculcated, they give the reins to pleasure, at that critical time of life, in which the passions are peculiarly strong, and reason weak ; and the authority of a parent not interposing, where it is most wanted, a disposition to licentiousness is compleatly formed, and such bad habits are contracted, as too often end in utter profligacy and ruin. At best, their minds not having been seasoned with the principles of religion, they become mere *men of the world*, without vice, perhaps, but also without virtue.

Also, in consequence of the same superficial education, to say the least of it,  
our



our youth having never thought upon the subject of religion, instead of entertaining those enlarged sentiments of *religious liberty*, which will never be wholly extinct in the breasts of their parents, the slightest inducement is often sufficient to make them abandon the *dissenting interest*, the value of which they were never taught to understand; and to make them conform to the established religion of this, and, for the same reason, to that of any other country in the world, attended with sufficient temporal encouragement.

With the disuse of *family prayer*, the regular *reading of the scriptures* has also been laid aside; so that in most of our opulent families, the youth have hardly an opportunity of making themselves acquainted with the contents of those books which are the source of all religious knowledge. When the bible, if there be one in the family, is wholly neglected by the parent, what inducement can the son have to look into it?

A false taste, and a pretended reverence for the scriptures has, likewise, banished them from many of our schools ; so that, except their being read in detached and unconnected portions, in places of public worship, many persons, it is to be feared, would live and die in the utter ignorance of the contents of their bibles.

With this neglect of family discipline, the neglect of discipline in our churches, which has been owing to similar causes, has likewise concurred. In many of our societies, the business of *catechising* has, likewise, been laid aside, nor has any thing been substituted in its place, as better adapted to communicate religious knowledge ; so that, as the minister is seldom seen but in the pulpit (I mean in a ministerial character) all the opportunity that the people have of being instructed in the theory of religion, is their hearing miscellaneous discourses, which are now almost every where confined to subjects, which have an immediate relation to practice, while



the *theory of religion*, and the *evidences of it*, are almost wholly neglected.

Because *common sense* is a sufficient guard against many errors in religion, it seems to have been taken for granted, that common sense is a sufficient *instructor* also ; whereas, in fact, without positive instruction, men would naturally have been mere *savages* with respect to religion ; as, without similar instruction, they would be savages with respect to the arts of life and the sciences. Common sense can only be compared to a *judge* ; but what can a judge do without evidence, and proper materials from which to form a judgment.

Such is the *evil*, of which not myself only, but every person who seriously considers the present state of things among the dissenters, and its manifest tendency in futurity, complain. Let us now consider what is the most proper and effectual *remedy* for this evil, and how far the application of it may be easy and practicable.

As the source of the evil, as far as it arises from ourselves, was observed to be two fold, namely the neglect of *parental* and *ministerial* instruction, it is easy to infer, that the most complete and effectual remedy must be two fold also, consisting in the revival of that discipline, both in churches and private families, by which we ourselves received that instruction, the advantages of which we are apt to overlook, till we see the dreadful effects of the want of it in others. If the discipline of our forefathers, in either of these respects, has been too severe for the gentleness of modern manners, let that severity be relaxed, but let nothing that is really useful be laid aside.

It is necessary that more attention be given both to the morals and the religious instruction of youth by those who undertake the conduct of our societies, as well as by their parents. If it be impossible, as I am apprehensive it generally will be, to revive the ancient forms of our church discipline, or to improve upon them (in  
consequence

consequence of which a number of the most intelligent, serious, and prudent members of our churches might be appointed to superintend the instruction of youth) let the minister exert himself the more in this field, which alone can promise a reward for his labours. When a person's mode of thinking, and his habits of life are fixed, as they generally are before they arrive at thirty or forty years of age, and especially when they have been confirmed by having met with no opposition or controul, from that time to a more advanced period of life, there can be but little prospect of making any good and lasting impressions. In this case, a change of thinking, or acting, will be brought about, if at all, with very great difficulty, and old notions and habits will be apt to return upon the slightest occasions, and get firmer hold of the mind than ever.

If men have lived all their lives unacquainted with better principles, the proposal of them may strike and influence ;

### xxx    *The method of communicating*

but if they relate to subjects which they have often heard canvassed, and on which little can be said that is absolutely *new* to them, it may be taken for granted, that the recital of arguments which they presume have been fully confuted, will only confirm them in their former prejudices. It is best, therefore, to bear with the *aged*, and, in many cases, with those who are advanced to middle life, and not without some very urgent reason, arising from very particular circumstances, attempt the arduous, and almost hopeless task of rectifying their errors ; though something more should be done towards reforming their conduct. But in youth the mind is flexible, opinions are unfixed, and habits not confirmed. At this time of life, therefore, arguments and expostulations may have real weight, good principles and maxims may be recommended with effect ; and a little seasonable assistance may be sufficient to mould them to our wish.



The great object of a minister's chief attention being thus fixed, viz. upon the younger, and more teachable part of his congregation, it remains to be considered in what manner their instruction may be best provided for. Now it appears to me, that the only effectual provision for this purpose is a course of regular and systematical instruction. Every branch of knowledge is built on certain facts and principles; and in order that these be fully and clearly understood, they must be delivered in a proper order, so that one thing may most naturally introduce another. In other words, no branch of knowledge, religion not excepted, can be taught to advantage but in the way of *system*. Frightful as this word may sound, it signifies nothing but an orderly and regular set of principles, beginning with the easiest, and ending with the most difficult, which, in this manner, are the most easily demonstrated. No person would ever think of teaching *Law* or *Medicine*, or any other branch of science in the manner in which religion is now generally

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taught;



taught ; and as no person ever acquired a competent knowledge of Law, Medicine, or any other science by hearing declamatory discourses upon the subject ; so neither can we reasonably expect that a just and comprehensive knowledge of religion should ever be communicated in the same loose and incoherent manner. Besides, it is now too much the fashion to neglect public worship, and any scheme of business or pleasure is thought to be a sufficient excuse for a person's absenting himself from it, even on the Lord's-day ; so that this only means of instruction, insufficient as it is for the purpose, is becoming every day more uncertain ; and it may be expected that less advantage will be made of it continually.

On these accounts, religious knowledge will never be communicated, with certainty and good effect, from the pulpit only. Those of the congregation who think themselves already sufficiently knowing, will be disgusted with the repetition of elementary principles ; to those who are  
extremely

extremely ignorant, it is not possible, in a formal discourse, to speak plainly and familiarly enough; and those whose minds are not sufficiently enlightened, and especially those whose prejudices are of long standing, will be apt to take offence at the discovery of truths which it will be impossible for them to comprehend or receive.

There can be no hope, therefore, of doing any thing to good purpose, in this way, unless the minister can have an opportunity of discoursing to the young men by themselves. He may then converse with them familiarly on the fundamental principles of natural and revealed religion; he may say the same things over and over again, and change his form of expression, in order to make himself perfectly understood; he may also illustrate what he advances by familiar instances, and examples, and set every thing of importance in a great variety of lights. Moreover, if they will submit to it (which it will be greatly to their advantage to do)

he may *examine* them on the subjects on which he has discoursed, so as to satisfy himself whether they have perfectly understood him, whether they retain in memory the facts and reasonings which he has advanced, and be sufficiently grounded in one thing before he proceeds to another. This method will also give him an opportunity of removing any difficulties, or answering any objections which may have occurred to them, or which may have been thrown in their way by other persons. In short, I would advise a minister to form the young men of his congregation from the age of 18 or 20 to about 30 into an *academical class*, and take the very same methods to teach them the elements of religion, that he would do to teach them the rudiments of any branch of natural knowledge.

To make this business the easier to the tutor, and the more advantageous to his pupils, it will be farther advisable, that he give his lectures from a short text or system, written, or rather printed, that they

they may have an opportunity of perusing it, and of studying it when they are by themselves, and thereby the better prepare themselves for examination.

I do not give this advice at random, or from theory only; for I have, in a great measure, carried the scheme which I am now recommending into execution; and I can assure my friends in the ministry that, as far as my own experience is a guide, they may promise themselves much pleasure, and their pupils much advantage from the exercise.

If it can be made agreeable to the people, I would also advise that the minister deliver the heads of his system in a set of regular discourses to the congregation at large, once in four or five years, that those persons whom it may not be advisable to admit to his familiar lectures, may have an opportunity of hearing some useful topicks discussed, at least, in a concise manner, which they might, otherwise, have never heard of at all. But, if the

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congregation



congregation should not be sufficiently uniform in their sentiments, it will hardly be prudent, for reasons sufficiently hinted above, to adopt this measure. It will also depend upon particular circumstances, whether the *young women* should be admitted to the familiar lectures along with the young men, or not.

That my readers may perfectly understand my scheme, and derive what advantage they please from it, I propose, God willing, to publish all the heads of my own lectures, under the title of *Institutes of natural and revealed religion*. Ministers whose sentiments are pretty nearly my own may, perhaps, save themselves some trouble by making use of them, departing from my particular sentiments or method, whenever they think proper. The whole work will be divided into four parts, the first comprizing the principles of natural religion, the second the evidences of revelation, the third the doctrine of revelation, and the fourth an account of the corruptions of christianity. This last will contain



tain the reasons for our protestant faith, and also those of our dissent from the established church of England, with which every dissenter ought to be made thoroughly acquainted.

Besides this principal class, I would advise a minister, who is desirous to communicate religious knowledge with effect, and who would adapt his instructions to the different ages of his hearers, to form *two other classes*, one consisting of children under fourteen years of age. To these he should teach a *short catechism*, containing the first elements of religious knowledge, delivered in the plainest and most familiar language possible; and when it is made use of, a variety of other questions should be asked, calculated to bring the subject to the level of their capacities. A catechism of this kind I published some years ago; and I am satisfied, from my own experience, that a child, even of four or five years of age, may be made to understand the most important truths of christianity, and that it is of great consequence.

sequence that the minds of children be impressed with this kind of knowledge as early as possible. No person who has actually made a trial of this method of instructing children, and who can do it with any degree of judgment, will say that it is a painful task to a child. On the contrary, I have generally found them to be pleased, and in many cases exceedingly delighted with it.

In the other junior class I would teach the knowledge of the *scriptures* only. This appears to me to be a subject so distinct, copious, and important, that a separate class should be appropriated to it; and I think that the best manner in which this great end can be gained, is to have a set of *questions only*, printed, with references to those places in the bible, which must be read, in order to find the proper answers. Such a *scripture catechism* as this I have drawn up, and shall immediately publish for my own use, and that of those who may approve of it. This class may properly consist of young persons of both sexes,

sexes, between the ages of fourteen and eighteen, or twenty, so as to be an intermediate class, between the two others. It may be advisable, however, and may even be necessary at the first, to add to this class such members of the higher class as are not sufficiently acquainted with the scriptures; and, in the present state of our societies, I am afraid that many such will be found above twenty years of age; but of these it may be hoped that there will be many, who will not think themselves too old to learn, and who may even take pleasure in such an exercise as this, which is equally calculated to improve the most knowing, as well as to instruct the most ignorant.

These three classes appear to me to be sufficient for the purpose of communicating religious instruction; at least, I cannot, at present, think of any thing better adapted to the purpose. I sincerely wish that other ministers, who cannot but be sensible of the evil that I complain of, would propose what appears to them to be

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be a proper remedy for it, and let us freely adopt whatever we approve in each others schemes.

To make room for lectures of such manifest utility as these, which I have now recommended, it were to be wished that *weekly*, and other *periodical preaching lectures*, especially that which is in many places preparatory to the Lord's supper, were laid aside. The last mentioned service, whatever good it may do in other respects, does, unquestionably, promote superstition; continually suggesting and confirming the opinion, that the attendance upon this christian ordinance requires more particular preparation than any other, which is an idea that could never occur to any person in perusing the New Testament only, and can be nothing but the remains of the popish doctrine of transubstantiation.

Other weekly or monthly sermons are seldom attended except by a few persons, and those chiefly the aged, and such others  
as.



as have the least occasion for them ; and they are often a burden to the minister, who is sensible that he is giving his labour, which might be better bestowed, to very little purpose. It has seemed fit to infinite wisdom, that one day in seven is proper and sufficient for rest from labour, and the purposes of public worship. When we are got beyond this *scripture directory*, all the rest is such *will worship*, as no bounds can be set to. It has certainly been the foundation of much superstition, and has, in many cases, occasioned a fatal and very criminal neglect of the proper business of this life. In what I have now said I would by no means be understood to condemn all occasional acts of public worship, as on days set apart for public fasting and thanksgiving. or on particular annual solemnities, some of which answer very good purposes.

As all christians are brethren, and we are expressly commanded to *exhort one another*, I hope it will not be deemed arrogant in me to have given my advice with respect to a matter of so much importance, as the  
best



best method of communicating religious knowledge, in which all christian ministers are equally concerned. The schemes which I have proposed are such as I can recommend from the trial that I have made of them, and they appear to me to be very practicable by any person who is sufficiently qualified to discharge any other part of the ministerial duty ; and in the *country*, I believe, that such services will generally be acceptable as well as useful. As to the *city*, I am not so well able to judge ; but if I be not misinformed, the connection between *minister* and *people* is, in general, so slight, that schemes which suppose much personal respect for the pastor on one side, and an affectionate concern for the people on the other, can hardly be expected to succeed. The prevailing practice of a London minister preaching to one congregation in the morning, and to another in the afternoon, when each of them is able to provide for one (as in fact they half provide for two) tends still farther to sink the *minister* into a mere *lecturer*, and to exclude the idea of every thing besides a stipulated

stipulated sum of money on the one side, and mere *stipulated duty* on the other. In such congregations one would think that the epistles of Paul to Timothy and Titus were never read; and certainly the business of *ordination* in such places must be a mere form or farce, without any meaning whatever.

Hoping that my presumption in offering the preceding advice has not given offence, I shall take the farther liberty to conclude with a word of exhortation, in which I shall think myself equally concerned.

Since, My brethren in the christian ministry, in the present state of church discipline, so unequal a share of the burden is fallen upon us, let us not, through despair of doing every thing that ought to be done, think ourselves excusable in attempting nothing. If we cannot possibly warn all the unruly, comfort all the feeble minded, instruct all the ignorant, confirm all the doubting, and seek and save all  
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that are in danger of being lost, let us do all that we can in each of these branches of ministerial duty. Since, with respect to the business of *admonition*, we are so circumstanced, that we can but seldom attempt any thing with a prospect of success, let us do the more by way of *instruction*, which is a field that is still open to us. If we cannot reclaim from vice, let us endeavour to instill those principles which may prevent the commission of it, and to communicate that rational and useful knowledge, which is the only solid foundation of virtuous practice and good conduct in life.

If every man be a *steward*, according to the ability and opportunity which God has given him of being useful to his fellow creatures, much more ought we to consider ourselves in that light; and it is required of every steward that he be faithful to his trust. The master under whom we act, and to whom we are immediately accountable, is the great *shepherd and bishop of souls, Christ Jesus*. Our instructions are to  
*feed*

*feed his lambs, and his sheep.* Let us see to it, then, that none of those who are committed to our care *perish for lack of knowledge.* If they will *die in their iniquity*, let us so act under the melancholy prospect, that *their blood may not be required at our hands*; that we may, at least, *save our own souls*, if not *those that hear us.* When our Lord shall return, and take account of his servants, let it appear that we have diligently improved the talents with which we were intrusted, that of two we have made other two, and of five other five, &c. and then, and then only, shall we *not be ashamed before him at his coming.*

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## INSTITUTES OF RELIGION.

### P A R T I.

#### OF THE BEING AND ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.

**I**N these Institutes I shall endeavour to explain *the principles of natural and revealed religion*; or to assign the reasons why we acknowledge ourselves to be subject to the moral government of God, and why we profess ourselves to be christians, and consistent protestants.

Knowledge of this kind is, in its own nature, the most important of any that we can give our attention to; because it is

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the most nearly connected with our present and future happiness.

If there be a God, and if we be accountable to him for our conduct, it must be highly interesting to us to know all that we can concerning his character and government, concerning what he requires of us, and what we have to expect from him. If it be true that a person, pretending to be sent from God, hath assured us of a future life, it certainly behoves us to examine his pretensions to divine authority ; and if we see reason to admit them, to inform ourselves concerning the whole of his instructions, and particularly what kind of behaviour here will secure our happiness hereafter. Lastly, if the religion we profess be divine, and have been corrupted by the ignorance or artifice of men, it is a matter of consequence that it be restored to its primitive purity ; because its efficacy upon the heart and life must depend upon it. And if men have usurped any power with respect to religion which  
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the author of it has not given them, it is of consequence that their unjust claims be exposed and resisted.

In order to give the most distinct view of the principles of religion, I shall first explain what it is that we learn from *nature*, and then what farther lights we receive from *revelation*. But it must be observed, that, in giving a delineation of natural religion, I shall deliver what I suppose *might* have been known concerning God, our duty, and our future expectations by the light of nature, and not what *was actually* known of them by any of the human race; for these are very different things. Many things are, in their own nature, attainable, which, in fact, are never attained; so that though we find but little of the knowledge of God, and of his providence, in many nations, which never enjoyed the light of revelation, it does not follow that nature did not contain and teach those lessons, and that men had not the means of learning them, provided

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they had made the most of the light they had, and of the powers that were given them.

I shall, therefore, include under the head of *natural religion*, all that can be demonstrated, or proved to be true by natural reason, though it was never, in fact, discovered by it; and even though it be probable that mankind would never have known it without the assistance of revelation. Thus the doctrine of a future state may be called a doctrine of natural religion, if when we have had the first knowledge of it from divine revelation, we can afterwards show that the expectation of it was probable from the light of nature, and that present appearances are, upon the whole, favourable to the supposition of it.

## SECTION

## SECTION I.

*Of the existence of God, and those attributes which are deduced from his being considered as uncaused himself, and the cause of every thing else.*

WHEN we say there is a GOD, we mean that there is an intelligent designing cause of what we see in the world around us, and a being who was himself uncaused. Unless we have recourse to this supposition, we cannot account for present appearances ; for there is an evident incapacity in every thing we see of being the cause of its own existence, or of the existence of other things. Though, in one sense, some things are the causes of others, yet they are only so in part ; and when we give sufficient attention to their nature, we shall see, that it is very improperly that they are termed *causes* at all : for when we have allowed all that we can to their influence and operation,

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ration, there is still something that must be referred to a prior and superior cause. Thus we say that a proper soil, together with the influences of the sun and the rain, are the causes of the growth of plants ; but, in fact, all that we mean, and all that, in strictness, we ought to say, is, that according to the present constitution of things, plants could not grow but in those circumstances ; for, if there had not been a body previously organized like a plant, and if there had not existed what we call *a constitution of nature*, in consequence of which plants are disposed to thrive by the influence of the soil, the sun, and the rain, those circumstances would have signified nothing ; and the fitness of the organs of a plant to receive nourishment from the soil, the rain, and the sun, is a proof of such wisdom and design, as those bodies are evidently destitute of. If the fitting of a suit of cloaths to the body of a man be an argument of *contrivance*, and consequently prove the existence of an intelligent agent, much more is the fitness  
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of a thousand things to a thousand other things in the system of nature a proof of an intelligent designing cause; and this intelligent cause we call GOD.

If, for argument's sake, we should admit that the immediate author of this world was not himself the first cause, but that he derived his being and powers from some other being, superior to him; still in tracing the cause of this being, and the cause of his cause, &c. we shall at length be constrained to acknowledge a *first cause*, one who is himself uncaused, and who derives his being and cause from no superior whatever.

It must be acknowledged, however, that our faculties are unequal to the comprehension of this subject. Being used to pass from effects to causes, and being used to look for a cause adequate to the thing caused, and consequently to expect a greater cause for a greater effect, it is natural to suppose, that, if the things we

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see,



see, which we say are the production of divine power, required a cause, the divine being himself must have required a greater cause. But this train of reasoning would lead us into a manifest absurdity, in inquiring for a higher and a higher cause *ad infinitum*. It may, perhaps, be true, though we cannot distinctly see it to be so, that as all *finite* things require a cause, *infinites* admit of none. It is evident, that nothing can *begin* to be without a cause ; but it by no means follows from thence, that that must have had a cause which had *no beginning*. But whatever there may be in this conjecture, we are constrained, in pursuing the train of causes and effects, to stop at last at something uncaused.

That any being should be *self created* is evidently absurd, because that would suppose that he had a being before he had, or that he existed, and did not exist at the same time. For want of clearer knowledge of this subject, we are obliged  
to



to content ourselves with terms that convey only *negative* ideas, and to say that God is a being *uncreated*, or *uncaused*; and this is all that we mean when we sometimes say that he is *self existent*.

It has been said by some, that if we suppose an *infinite succession* of finite beings, there will be no necessity to admit any thing to have been uncaused. The race of men, for instance, may have been from eternity, no individual of the species being much superior to the rest. But this supposition only involves the question in more obscurity, and does not approach, in the least, to the solution of any difficulty. For if we carry this imaginary succession ever so far back in our ideas, we are in just the same situation as when we set out; for we are still considering a species of beings who cannot so much as comprehend even their own make and constitution; and we are, therefore, still in want of some being who was capable of thoroughly knowing, and of forming

A 5

them,

them, and also of adapting the various parts of their bodies, and the faculties of their minds, to the sphere of life in which they act. In fact, an infinite *succession* of finite beings as much requires a cause, as a *single* finite being ; and we have as little satisfaction in considering one of them as uncaused, as we have in considering the other.

It was said, by the Epicureans of old, that all things were formed by the *fortuitous concurrence of atoms*, that, originally, there were particles of all kinds floating at random in infinite space ; and that, since certain combinations of particles constitute all bodies, and since, in infinite time, these particles must have been combined in all possible ways, the present system at length arose, without any designing cause. But, still, it may be asked, how could these atoms *move* without a *mover* ; and what could have arisen from their combinations, but mere heaps of matter, of different forms and sizes. They

They could, of themselves, have had no power of acting upon one another, as bodies now have, by such properties as magnetism, electricity, gravitation, &c. unless these powers had been communicated to them by some superior being.

It is no wonder, that we feel, and must acknowledge the imperfection of our faculties, when they are employed upon such a subject as this. We are involved in inextricable difficulties in considering the origin, as we may say, of the *works* of God. It is impossible that we should conceive how creation should have been coeval with its maker ; and yet, if we admit that there ever was a time when nothing existed, besides the divine being himself, we must suppose a whole eternity to have preceded any act of creation ; an eternity in which the divine being was possessed of the power and disposition to create, and to make happy, without once exerting them ; or that a reason for creating must have occurred to him after the lapse

of a whole eternity, which had not occurred before ; and these seem to be greater difficulties than the other. Upon the whole, it seems to be the most agreeable to reason, though it be altogether incomprehensible by our reason, that there never was a time when this great uncaused being did not exert his perfections, in giving life and happiness to his offspring. We shall, also, find no greater difficulty in admitting, that the creation, as it had no beginning, so neither has it any *bounds* ; but that infinite space is replenished with worlds, in which the power, wisdom, and goodness of God always have been, and always will be displayed.

There seems to be no difficulty in these amazing suppositions, except what arises from the imperfection of our faculties ; and if we reject these, we must of necessity adopt other suppositions, still more improbable, and involve ourselves in much greater difficulties. It is, indeed, impossible for us to conceive, in an adequate manner,



manner, concerning any thing that is infinite, or even to express ourselves concerning them without falling into seeming absurdities. If we say that it is impossible that the works of God should have been from eternity, we may say the same concerning any particular thought in the divine mind, or even concerning any particular moment of time in the eternity that has preceded us; for these are all of the nature of particular *events*, which must have taken place at some definite time, or at some precise given distance from the present moment. But as we are sure that the divine being himself, and *duration* itself, must have been without beginning, notwithstanding this argument; the works of God may also have been without beginning, notwithstanding the same argument. It may make this difficulty the easier to us, to consider that *thinking* and *acting*, or *creating*, may be the same thing with God.



So little are our minds equal to these speculations, that though we all agree, that an infinite duration must have preceded the present moment, and that another infinite duration must necessarily follow it ; and though the former of these is continually receiving additions, which is, in our idea, the same thing as its growing continually larger ; and the latter is constantly suffering as great diminutions, which, in our idea, is the same thing as its growing continually less ; yet we are forced to acknowledge that they both ever have been, and always must be exactly equal ; neither of them being at any time conceivably greater, or less than the other. Nay we cannot conceive how both these eternities, added together, can be greater than either of them separately taken.

Having demonstrated the existence of God, as the first cause, the creator, and disposer of all things ; we are naturally led to inquire, in the next place, what properties or attributes he is possessed of.

Now

Now these naturally divide themselves into *two classes* ; being either such as flow from his being considered as the original cause of all things, or such as the particular nature of the works of which he is the author lead us to ascribe to him.

## S E C T I O N II.

*Of those attributes of the deity which are deduced from the consideration of his being the original cause of all things.*

SINCE matter is a substance incapable of moving itself ; since it can only be *acted upon*, and we cannot connect with it the idea of *action*, or an original power of acting upon other things, we cannot but conclude that God is an *immaterial* being, or a *spirit*. But, we must acknowledge ourselves to be altogether ignorant of the nature or *essence* of God, and, indeed, of *matter* too ; since, to the properties of length, breadth, and thickness

thickness, we cannot be certain but that other properties, of very different natures, such as even *perception* and *intelligence*, may be superadded. But should this be possible, we still cannot conceive that a thing which, of itself, is so sluggish and inert, should be the original cause and fountain of life, action, and motion to all other beings. Notwithstanding our ignorance, therefore, concerning the nature of matter, and of the properties which may, or may not be compatible with it, there seems to be sufficient reason to conclude, that the essence of God cannot be matter, but something very different from it, which we therefore call immaterial, or spiritual.

Secondly, the original cause of all things must have been *eternal*; for, since nothing can begin to exist without a cause, if there ever had been a time when nothing existed, nothing could have existed at present.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, this original cause must likewise be *immutable*, or not subject to change. We seem to require no other proof of this, than the impossibility of conceiving whence a change could arise in a being uncaused. If there was no cause of his existence itself, it seems to follow, that there could be no cause of a change in the manner of his existence ; so that whatever he was originally, he must for ever continue to be. Besides, a capacity of producing a change in any being or thing, implies something prior and superior, something that can control, and that is incapable of being resisted ; which can only be true of the supreme cause itself.

The immutability of the divine being, or his being incapable of being acted upon, or controlled by any other, is what we mean when we say that he is an *independent* being, if by this term we mean any thing more than his being *uncaused*.

## SECTION



## SECTION III.

*Of those attributes of the divine being which the consideration of his works leads us to ascribe to him.*

**T**HAT God is *immaterial, eternal,* and *immutable*, follows necessarily, as we have seen, from his being *uncaused*; but if we consider the *effects* of which he is the cause, or, in other words, the *works* of which he is the author, we shall be led to ascribe to him other attributes, particularly those of *power, wisdom, and goodness*; and consequently all the attributes which are necessarily connected with, or flow from them.

If we call a being *powerful*, when he is able to produce great effects, or to accomplish great works, we cannot avoid ascribing this attribute to God, as the author of every thing that we behold; and when  
we



we consider the apparent greatness, variety, and extent of the works of God, in the whole frame of nature; as in the sun, moon, and stars; in the earth which we inhabit, and in the vegetables and animals which it contains, together with the powers of reason and understanding possessed by man, we cannot suppose any effect to which the divine power is not equal; and therefore we are authorised to say that it is *infinite*, or capable of producing any thing, that is not in its own nature impossible; so that whatever purposes the divine being forms, he is always able to execute.

The *designs* of such a being as this, who cannot be controlled in the execution of any of his purposes, would be very obvious to us if we could comprehend his works, or see the issue of them; but this we cannot do with respect to the works of God, which are both incomprehensible by our finite understandings, and also are not yet compleated; for as far as they are sub-  
ject

ject to our inspection, they are evidently in a progress to something more perfect. Yet from the *subordinate parts* of this great machine of the universe, which we can in some measure understand, and which are compleated ; and also from the manifest *tendency* of things, we may safely conclude, that the great design of the divine being, in all the works of his hands, was to produce happiness.

That the world is in a state of improvement is very evident in the human species, which is the most distinguished part of it. Knowledge, and a variety of improvements depending upon knowledge (all of which are directly or indirectly subservient to happiness) have been increasing from the time of our earliest acquaintance with history to the present ; and in the last century this progress has been amazingly rapid. By means of increasing commerce, the valuable productions of the earth become more equally distributed, and by improvements in agriculture they are continually

tinually multiplied, to the great advantage of the whole family of mankind.

It is partly in consequence of this improvement of the human species, as we may call it, that the earth itself is in a state of improvement, the cultivated parts continually gaining ground on the uncultivated ones; by which means, besides many other advantages, even the inclemencies of the weather are, in some measure, lessened, and the world becomes a more healthy and pleasurable abode for its most important inhabitants. If things proceed as they have done in these respects, the earth will become a paradise, compared to what it was formerly, or with what it is at present.

It is a considerable evidence of the goodness of God, that the inanimate parts of nature, as the surface of the earth, the air, water, salts, minerals, &c. are adapted to answer the purposes of vegetable and animal life, which abounds  
every

every where ; and the former of these is evidently subservient to the latter ; all the vegetables that we are acquainted with either directly contributing to the support of animal life, or being, in some other way, useful to it ; and all animals are furnished with a variety of appetites and powers, which continually prompt them to *seek*, and enable them to *enjoy* some kind of happiness.

It seems to be an evident argument that the author of all things intended the animal creation to be happy, that, when their powers are in their full strength, and exercise, they are always happy ; health and enjoyment having a natural and necessary connection through the whole system of nature ; whereas it can hardly be imagined, but that a malevolent being, or one who should have made creatures with a design to make them miserable, would have constituted them so, that when any creature was the most perfect, it would have been the most unhappy.

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It agrees with the supposition of the benevolence of the divine being, that there is the most ample provision made for the happiness of those creatures which are naturally capable of the most enjoyment, particularly the human species. We have a far greater variety and extent of powers, both of action and enjoyment, than any other inhabitants of the earth; and the world abounds with more sources of happiness to us than to any other order of beings upon it. So perfectly adapted are the inanimate, the vegetable, and the animal world to the occasions and purposes of man, that we may almost say, that every thing was made for our use; and though there are both plants and animals, which, in some applications, are noxious to us, yet, in time, we come to find out their uses, and learn to avail ourselves of their extraordinary powers.

There are many things in the system of nature, as tempests, lightning, diseases, and death, which greatly terrify and annoy



noy us, and which are often the occasion of much pain and distress ; but these evils are only partial ; and when the whole system, of which they are a part, and a necessary consequence, is considered, it will be found to be, as far as we can judge, the best, and the most friendly to us upon the whole ; and that no other *general laws*, which should obviate and exclude these evils, would have been productive of so much happiness. And it should be a rule with us, when we are considering any particular thing in the system of nature, to take in every thing that is necessarily connected with it, and every thing that we should lose if we were deprived of it ; so that if, upon the whole, we should, in that case, lose more than we should gain, we must pronounce the thing complained of to be beneficial to us, and should thankfully bear the evil, for the sake of the greater good that accompanies it. Fire, for instance, is the occasion of a great deal of mischief and distress in the world, but this is not to be compared with the benefits

nefits that we derive from the use of that element.

It may be said, indeed, that the divine being might have separated these things, and, if he had been perfectly benevolent, might have given us the good unmixed with evil. But there are many pains and evils which are useful to us, and upon the whole give us a greater enjoyment of life, as being pains and evils in themselves. It is a common observation, that many persons are much happier, in a variety of respects, in the prime of life, and especially towards the close of it, for the pains and the hardships they suffered at their entrance upon it. The difficulties we meet with contribute to strengthen the mind, by furnishing proper exercise both for our passions and our understandings, and they also heighten our relish of the good that we meet with. The more attention we give to evils of all kinds, the more good do we see to accompany them, or to follow them; so that, for any thing that we

know, a better system, that is, a system abounding with more happiness, could not have been made than this, even as it is at present ; and much more if we suppose, what is very probable, a tendency to much greater happiness in the completion of the whole scheme.

One of the greatest and most striking evils in the system of nature, is that one animal should be made to prey upon another, as lions, tygers, wolves, eagles, serpents, and other beasts, birds, and insects of prey ; and, at first sight, it might seem more agreeable to benevolence, to have formed no such carnivorous creatures ; as every animal would then have lived without fear or apprehension, and the world, as we are apt to imagine, would have been the scene of universal peace and joy. But this is the conclusion of a superficial observer. For it may easily be demonstrated, that there is more happiness in the present system than there would have been in that imaginary one ; and, therefore

fore, that this constitution of things, notwithstanding its inconveniences, must have appeared preferable in the eye of a benevolent being.

If all the species of animals had been suffered to multiply without interfering with one another, they would all have soon been involved in famine and distress ; and whenever they died, their carcasses would have infected the air, and have made it nauseous and unhealthy ; whereas, at present, all animals have, in general, a sufficiency of food ; they suffer very little from the fear of danger ; while they are in their vigour, they are pretty well able to defend themselves, or to provide for their safety by flight ; when they grow feeble, and life would become a burthen, they serve to support the life and vigour of animals of a different species ; and the pangs of a sudden and violent death are not so dreadful as those that are occasioned by lingering sickness. If any animals die by a natural death, there are other



animals enow, quadrupeds, birds, and insects, that are ready to seize upon the carcase ; and to them it is, in the most putrid state, grateful and wholesome food.

Man is a carnivorous animal, but it is happy for the animals which he lives upon that he is so. What a number of cows, and sheep, and fowls, do we feed, attend upon, and make happy ; which, otherwise, would either have had no existence at all, or a very miserable one ; and what is a sudden and unexpected death, compared with their previous enjoyment ; with a life spent in far greater pleasure and satisfaction than they could otherwise have known ?

Farther, all the evils we complain of are the result of what we call *general laws*, in consequence of which the same events invariably follow from the same previous circumstances ; and without those general laws, all would be uncertainty and confusion. Thus it follows from the general law



law of gravitation, that bodies heavier than the air will, when unsupported, fall to the ground. Now cannot we conceive that it is better, upon the whole, that this law of nature, which is productive of a thousand benefits every moment, and whereby the whole earth, and probably the whole universe is held together, should be preserved invariably, than that it should be suspended whenever any temporary inconvenience would arise from it; as whenever a man should step from a precipice, to prevent his breaking his bones, or being dashed to pieces? If there were no general laws of nature, causing the same effects to follow from the same previous circumstances, there would be no exercise for the wisdom and understanding of intelligent beings; and, consequently, we should not be in circumstances in which we could arrive at the proper perfection and happiness of our natures. If there were no general laws, we could not know what events to expect, or depend upon, in consequence of any thing

we did. We could have none of that pleasure and satisfaction that we now have in contemplating the course of nature, which might be one thing to day, and another to morrow ; and as no man could lay a scheme with a prospect of accomplishing it, we should soon become listless and indifferent to every thing, and consequently unhappy.

It may be said, that we might have been differently constituted, so as to have been happy in a world not governed by general laws, and not liable to partial evils. But there is no end of those suppositions, which, for any thing that we can tell, may be, in their own nature, impossible. All that we can do, in these difficult speculations, is to consider the connections and tendencies of things as they now are ; and if we see reason to conclude that, *ceteris manentibus*, nothing could be changed for the better, we may also conclude that the *system itself* could not be changed for a better ; since the same wisdom that has so perfectly,

perfectly adapted the various parts of the same scheme, so as to make it productive of the most happiness, may well be supposed to have made choice of *the scheme itself*, as calculated to contain the most happiness. Even divine power cannot produce impossibilities ; and for any thing that we know, it may be as naturally impossible to execute any scheme free from the inconveniences, that we complain of in this, as that *two and two* should make more than *four*.

Upon the whole, the face of things is such as gives us abundant reason to conclude, that God made every thing with a view to the happiness of his creatures and offspring. And we are confirmed in this supposition, from considering the utter impossibility of conceiving of any end that could be answered to himself in the misery of his creatures ; whereas the divine being may be conceived to rejoice in, and perhaps receive pleasure from the happiness of all around him. This, how-

ever, is the most *honourable* idea that we can form of any being; and can it be supposed that our maker would have constituted us in such a manner, as that our natural ideas of perfection and excellence should not be applicable to the essential attributes of his own nature? Our natural approbation of love and benevolence is, therefore, a proof of the divine benevolence, as it cannot be supposed that he should have made us to hate, and not to love himself.

That every part of so complex a system as this should be so formed, as to conspire to promote this one great end, namely the happiness of the creation, is a clear proof of the *wisdom* of God. The proper evidence of *design*, or *contrivance* is such a fitness of means to gain any end, that the correspondence between them cannot be supposed to be the result of what we call *accident*, or *chance*. Now there are so many adaptations of one thing to another in the system of nature, that  
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the idea of chance is altogether excluded ; infomuch that there is reason enough to conclude, that every thing has its proper use, by means of a designed reference to something else ; and that nothing has been made, or is disposed of, but to answer a good and benevolent purpose. And the more closely we inspect the works of God, the more exquisite art and contrivance do we discover in them. This is acknowledged by all persons who have made any part of nature their particular study, whether they have been of a religious turn of mind, or not.

We see the greatest wisdom in the distribution of light and heat to the different parts of the earth, by means of the revolution of the earth upon its axis, and its obliquity to the plane in which it moves ; so that every climate is not only habitable by men whose constitutions are adapted to it, but every part of the world may be visited by the inhabitants of any other place ; and there is no country which the

same person is not capable of accustoming himself to, and making tolerable, if not agreeable to him, in a reasonable space of time.

We see the greatest wisdom in the variation of the seasons of the year in the same place, in the provision that is made for watering as well as warming the soil, so as to prepare it for the growth of the various kinds of vegetables that derive their nourishment from it. The wisdom of God appears in adapting the constitutions of vegetables and animals to the climates they were intended to inhabit, in giving all animals the proper means of providing their food, and the necessary powers either of attacking others, or securing themselves by flight, or some other method of evading the pursuit of *their* enemies. The carnivorous and voracious animals have a degree of strength and courage suited to their occasions, whereby they are prompted to seize upon their prey, and are enabled to master and secure it; and ~~the~~

the weak have that degree of timidity, which keeps them attentive to every appearance of danger, and warns them to have recourse to some methods of securing themselves from it. We see the greatest wisdom in the provision that is made in nature against the loss or extinction of any species of vegetables or animals, by their easy multiplication, according to the want there is of them. The most useful vegetables grow every where, without care or cultivation, as for example, the different kinds of grass. Small and tame animals breed fast, whereas the large and carnivorous ones propagate very slowly, which keeps the demand on the one hand, and the consumption on the other, nearly equal.

The human body exhibits the clearest and the most numerous marks of wisdom and contrivance, whereby each part receives its proper nourishment, and is fitted for its proper functions ; all of which are admirably adapted to our real occasions

in life. How conveniently are the organs of all our senses disposed, how well secured, and how excellently adapted to their proper uses; and how exceedingly serviceable are all of them to us. We see the wisdom of God both in what we call the *instincts* of brutes, and the *reason* of man; each of these principles being exactly fitted to our several occasions.

We also see the wisdom of God in the natural *sanctions of virtue* in this world; so that those persons who addict themselves to vice and wickedness become miserable and wretched in the natural course of things, without any particular interposition of providence; whereas virtue and integrity is generally rewarded with peace of mind, the approbation of our fellow creatures, and a reasonable share of security and success.

Could we see all the causes of the rise and fall of empires, and in what manner the happiness of mankind is connected  
with



with great events in the history of the world, it is not to be doubted, but that we should see as much wisdom in the conduct of divine providence with respect to them; so as not to doubt (though we should not have been informed of it by revelation) *that the Lord God ruleth in the kingdoms of men, giving them to whomsoever he pleases*, and promoting his own wise and benevolent purposes by the disposition of them.

Lastly, it is an argument of the wisdom of God, that he has given wisdom to man and other creatures, for he could not give a power of which he was not himself possessed in a much more eminent degree.

These attributes of *power*, *wisdom* and *goodness*, are all that we can *directly* demonstrate from the consideration of the works of God. Every other of his attributes is deduced from these; and since the divine being has been proved to be powerful, wise, and good, he must likewise

wife be whatever a powerful, wise, and good being cannot but be. These, therefore, together with the attributes of *self-existence, immateriality, eternity, and unchangeableness*, may be called the *primary* attributes of God; and all others may be called *secondary* ones, or such as depend upon, and flow from those that are primary.

## S E C T I O N IV.

*Of those attributes of God which are deduced from the consideration of his power, wisdom, and goodness jointly.*

**A**S the matter of which the world consists can only be moved and acted upon, and is altogether incapable of moving itself, or of acting; so all the *powers of nature*, or the tendencies of things to their

their different motions and operations, can only be the effect of the divine energy, perpetually acting upon them, and causing them to have certain tendencies and effects. A stone, for instance, can no more move, or tend downwards, that is towards the earth, of itself, than it can move or tend upwards, that is from the earth. That it does tend downwards, or towards the earth, must, therefore, be owing to the divine energy, an energy without which the power of gravitation would cease, and the whole frame of the earth be dissolved.

It follows from these principles, that no powers of nature can take place, and that no creature whatever can exist, without the divine agency ; so that we can no more *continue*, than we could *begin* to exist without the divine will.

God, having made all things, and exerting his influence over all things, must know all things, and consequently be  
*omniscient*

*omniscient*. Also, since he not only ordained, but constantly supports all the laws of nature, he must be able to foresee what will be the result of them, at any distance of time ; just as a man who makes a clock can tell when it will strike. All future events, therefore, must be as perfectly known to the divine mind as those that are present ; and as we cannot conceive that he should be liable to forgetfulness, we may conclude that all things, past, present, and to come, are equally known to him, so that his knowledge is *infinite*.

The divine being, knowing all things, and exerting his influence on all the works of his hands, whereby he supports the existence of every thing that he has made, and maintains the laws which he has established in nature, must be, in a proper sense of the term, *omnipresent*. For, tho' being a *spirit*, he can have no proper relation to place, and much less to one particular place more than another (which  
is



is a property of spirit of which we can have no adequate conception) he must have a power of acting every where, to which the idea belonging to omnipresence is sufficiently applicable.

Since God made all things to answer an important end, namely the happiness of his creatures; since his power is so great, that nothing can be too difficult for him; since his knowledge is so extensive, that nothing can pass unnoticed by him; and since the minutest things in the creation, and the most inconsiderable events, may affect the end that he has in view, his *providence* must necessarily extend to all his works; and we may conclude that he constantly attends to every individual of his creatures, and out of every evil that befalls any of them produces good to themselves or others.

We cannot help conceiving that any being must be *happy* when he accomplishes all his designs. The divine being, therefore,

fore, having power and wisdom to execute all his designs, we infer that he must be happy, and perfectly so. Also, though we cannot say that the consequence is demonstrable, we cannot but think that he who makes us happy, and whose sole end in creating us was to make us happy, must be happy himself, and in a greater degree than we are capable of being.

In all the preceding course of reasoning, we have only argued from what we see, and have supposed nothing more than is necessary to account for what we see; and as *a* cause is necessary, but not *more causes* than one, we cannot conclude that there are more Gods than *one*, unless some other kind of proof can be brought for it.

Besides, there is such a perfect *harmony* and *uniformity* in the works of nature, and one part so exactly fits and corresponds to another, that there must have been a perfect *uniformity of design* in the whole, which hardly admits of more than one  
being

being as the former of it, and presiding over it. It was only the mixture of evil in the world that was the reason why some of the heathens supposed that there are *two principles* in nature, the one the source of good, and the other of evil, the one benevolent, and the other malevolent.

These two principles, they supposed to be at present continually struggling against one another, though it was their opinion that the good would finally prevail. But we have seen that all the evil that there is in the world is a necessary part of the whole scheme, and inseparable from it; so that the good and the evil must have had the same author. Besides, they both conspire to the same end, the happiness of the creation.

Upon the whole, we may remain perfectly satisfied, that there is but *one God*, possessed of all the perfections, that have been described; and were our minds equal to this subject, I doubt not but that we  
should

should be able to see, that there *could have been* but one, and that two Gods would have been impossible; as much so, as that there should be in nature two universal infinite spaces, or two eternities, both before and after the present moment. But because we are incapable of judging what *must have been* in this case, we are content to argue from what *is*; and upon this ground we have reason enough to conclude that *God is one*.

Since the divine power and wisdom are so amazingly great, that we cannot conceive any effect to which they are not equal; nay since we are *able to comprehend but* a very small part of the actual effects of the power and wisdom of God, and new views are continually opening to us, which are continually exciting greater admiration, there can be no danger of our exceeding the truth, if we endeavour to conceive of these perfections of God as *infinite*. Indeed we have sufficient reason to believe that, strictly speaking, they  
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are so ; though we are not able directly to demonstrate it : because we, being finite, cannot comprehend any thing that is infinite ; and not being able to comprehend an infinite effect, we cannot fully demonstrate infinity in the cause. The *extent*, and other properties of the divine goodness, I shall consider more at large.

## S E C T I O N V.

*Of the properties of the divine goodness.*

**I**F goodness, or benevolence, be the great governing principle, or spring of action in the divine being, happiness must prevail amongst those of his creatures that are capable of it. If it were possible that there should be, upon the whole, more misery than happiness in the creation, it would be an argument that the supreme  
being

being was malevolent. For since all tendencies and issues of things were, from the first, perfectly known to him, it would, supposing him to be benevolent, have produced no system at all, rather than one in which misery might prevail. No scheme, therefore, which supposes the greater number of the creatures of God to be miserable upon the whole, can be consistent with the supposition of the divine benevolence. The *means*, or the *manner* by which the creatures of God are involved in misery makes no difference in this case; for if it arise even from themselves, it arises from the nature that God has given them; and if he had foreseen that the constitution which he gave them would, in the circumstances in which he placed them, issue in their final ruin, he would not have given them that constitution, or have disposed of them in that manner; unless he had intended that they should be finally miserable; that is, unless he himself had taken pleasure in misery, in consequence of his being of a malevolent disposition.

It must be impossible, for the same reason, that the divine being should be capable of sacrificing the interests of a *greater number*, to that of a *few* of his creatures; though it may, perhaps, be necessary, that the interests of a few give place to that of a greater number. For if he had a desire to produce happiness *at all*, it seems to be an evident consequence, that he must prefer a greater degree of happiness to a less; and a greater sum of happiness can exist in a greater number, than in a smaller.

For the same reason, also, the goodness of God must be *impartial*. Since the supreme being stands in an equal relation to all his creatures and offspring, he must be incapable of that kind of partiality, by which we often give the preference to one person above another. There must be a good reason for every thing that looks like *preference* in the conduct and government of God; and no reason can be a good one, with respect to a benevolent

lent being, but what is founded upon benevolence. If, therefore, some creatures enjoy more happiness than others, it must be because the happiness of the creation in general requires that they should have that preference, and because a less *sum of good* would have been produced upon any other disposition of things.

Thus it is probable that a *variety* in the ranks of creatures, whereby some have a much greater capacity of happiness than others, and are therefore more favoured by divine providence than others, makes a *better system*, and one more favourable to general happiness, than any other, in which there should have been a perfect equality in all advantages and enjoyments. We are not, therefore, to say that God is partial to men, because they have greater powers, and enjoy more happiness than worms ; but must suppose, that the system in which there was provision for the greatest sum of happiness required

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ed that there should be some creatures in the rank of men, and others in the rank of worms ; and that each has reason to rejoice in the divine goodness, though they partake of it in different degrees. Indeed, it were absurd to suppose, that, properly speaking, there was any thing like *preference* in the divine being chusing to make *this* a man, and *the other* a worm ; because they had no being before they were created ; and therefore it could not be any thing like affection to the one more than the other that determined his conduct. In reality, it is improper to say that God chose to make *this a man*, and *that a worm* ; for the proper expression is, that he chose to make *a man*, and *a worm*.

Among creatures of the same general class or rank, there may be differences in advantages and in happiness ; but they must be founded on the same considerations with the differences in the ranks themselves ; that is, it must be favourable to the happiness of the whole that there

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should

should be those differences ; and it cannot arise from any arbitrary or partial preference of one to another, independent of a regard to the happiness of the whole ; which is what we mean by an arbitrary and partial affection.

There is a variety of cases in which we may plainly see, that the happiness of one has a reference to, and is productive of the happiness of others ; as in the principle of benevolence, whereby we are naturally disposed to rejoice in the happiness of others. For we cannot procure ourselves these sympathetic pleasures, at least, in any considerable degree, without contributing to the happiness of those around us. This, being a source of pleasure to ourselves, is a constant motive to benevolent actions.

Lastly, if God be benevolent at all, he must be *infinitely* so ; at least we can see no reason why he should wish to make his creation happy *at all*, and not wish to  
make

make it as happy *as possible*. If this be the case, the reason why all his creatures are not, at all times, as happy as their natures can bear, must be because *variety* and *a gradual advance* are, in the nature of things, necessary to their complete and final happiness.

Besides, as there is reason to believe that the other perfections of God, his wisdom, power, &c. are infinite, it seems to follow, by analogy, that his goodness must be so too, though we may not be able to prove it demonstrably and consequentially.

It must be owned to be impossible completely to answer every objection that may be made to the supposition of the infinite benevolence of God; for, supposing all his creatures to be constantly happy, still, as there are *degrees of happiness*, it may be asked, why, if their maker be infinitely benevolent, do not his creatures enjoy a higher degree of it. But this question

may always be asked, so long as the happiness of any creature is only *finite*, that is less than infinite, or less than the happiness of God himself, which, in its own nature, it must necessarily be. It must be consistent, therefore, even with the infinite benevolence of God, that his creatures, which are necessarily finite, be finitely, that is imperfectly happy. And when all the circumstances relating to any being are considered at once, as they are by the divine mind, positive evils have only the same effect as a diminution of positive good, being balanced, as it were, against a degree of good to which it was equivalent; so that the overplus of happiness which falls to the share of any being, after allowance has been made for the evils which he suffers, is to be considered as his share of *unmixed happiness*.

It is only owing to our imperfection, or the want of *comprehension of mind*, in which, however, we advance every day, that we are not able to make all our pleasures



asures and pains perfectly to *coalesce*, so as that we shall be affected by the difference only. And whenever we shall be arrived at this state; whenever, by long experience, we shall be able to connect in our minds the ideas of all the things which are causes and effects to one another, all partial evils will absolutely vanish in the contemplation of the greater good with which they are connected. This will be perfectly the case with respect to all *intellectual* pleasures and pains, and even *painful sensations*, will be much moderated, and more tolerable under the lively persuasion of their contributing to our happiness on the whole. However, in the light in which the divine being, who has this perfect comprehension, views his works, (and this must be the true light in which they ought to be considered) there is this perfect coincidence of all things that are connected with, and subservient to one another; so that, since all evils are necessarily connected with some good, and generally are directly productive of it, all the

works of God, appear to him *at all times* very good, happiness greatly abounding upon the whole. And since the works of God are infinite, he contemplates an infinity of happiness, of his own production, and, in his eye, happiness unmixed with evil.

This conclusion, however, is hardly consistent with the supposition that any of the creatures of God are necessarily miserable in the whole of their existence. In the ideas of such creatures, even when they have arrived at the most perfect comprehension of mind, their being must seem a curse to them, and the author of it will be considered as malevolent with respect to them, though not so to others.

It seems, likewise, to be a reflection upon the *wisdom* of God, that he should not be able to produce the happiness of some, without the final misery of others; and so incapable are we of conceiving how the latter of these can be necessary  
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to the former ; that, if we retain the idea of the divine benevolence, together with his power and wisdom in any high degree, we cannot but reject the supposition. That any of the creatures of God should be finally, and upon the whole, miserable, cannot be a pleasing circumstance to their benevolent author ; nay it must, in its own nature, be the last means that he would have recourse to, to gain his end ; because, as far as it prevails, it is directly opposed to his end. We may, therefore rest satisfied, that there is no such *blot* in the creation as this ; but that all the creatures of God are intended by him to be happy upon the whole. He stands in an equal relation to them all, a relation in which they must all have reason to rejoice. He is their common father, protector, and friend.

## SECTION VI.

*Of the moral perfections of God deduced from his goodness.*

THE power and wisdom of God, together with those attributes which are derived from them, and also those which are deduced from his being considered as an uncaused being, may be termed his *natural* perfections; whereas his benevolence, and those other attributes which are deduced from it, are more properly termed his *moral* perfections; because they lead to such conduct as determines what we commonly call *moral character* in men.

The source of all the moral perfections of God seems to be his benevolence; and indeed there is no occasion to suppose him  
to



to be influenced by any other principle, in order to account for all that we see. Every other truly venerable or amiable attribute can be nothing but a *modification* of this. A perfectly good, or benevolent being, must be, in every other respect, whatever can be the object of our reverence, or our love. Indeed the connection of all the moral virtues, and the derivation of them from the single principle of benevolence are easily traced, even in human characters.

1. If a magistrate be benevolent, that is, if he really consult the happiness of his subjects, he must be *just*, or take notice of crimes, and punish the criminals. Otherwise, he would be cruel to the whole, and especially to the innocent, who would be continually liable to oppression, if there were no restraint of this kind.

2. But whenever an offence can be overlooked, and no injury accrue from it,

either to the offender himself, or to others, the benevolence of God, as well as that of a human magistrate, will require him to be *merciful*; so that implacability, or a desire of revenging an affront, without any regard to the prevention of farther evil, must be carefully excluded from the character of the divine being. He must delight in mercy because he wishes to promote happiness, though he may be under a necessity of punishing obstinate offenders, in order to restrain vice and misery.

There is more room for the display of mercy in the divine government than in that of men; because men, not being able to distinguish true repentance from the appearances of it, and pretences to it, must make but few deviations from general rules, lest they should increase crimes and hypocrisy; whereas the secrets of all hearts being open to God, he cannot be imposed upon by any pretences; so that if an offender be truly penitent, and it is known to him that he will not abuse his  
goodness,

goodness, he can receive him into favour, without apprehending any inconvenience whatever. Such cases as these, how dangerous soever the precedent might be in human governments, are not liable to be abused in the perfect administration of the divine being. Justice and mercy, therefore, are equally attributes of the divine being, and equally deducible from his goodness or benevolence; both, in their places, being necessary to promote the happiness of his creation.

3. As perfect benevolence is the rule of the divine conduct, and leads him to be both just and merciful, so we cannot but conceive that he must govern his conduct by every other rule that we find to be equally necessary to the well-being of society, particularly that of truth, or *veracity*. All human confidence would cease if we could not depend upon one another's word; and, in those circumstances, every advantage of society would be lost. There can be no doubt, therefore, but that the

divine being, if he should think proper to have any intercourse with his creatures, must be equally removed from a possibility of attempting to impose upon them.

4. As to those vices which arise from the irregular indulgence of our appetites and passions, we can have no idea of the possibility of their having any place in the divine being. We therefore conclude that he is, in all respects, *holy*, as well as just and good.

There are, also, some evidences of the justice and mercy of God in the course of providence. The constitution of human nature and of the world is such, that men cannot long persist in any species of wickedness without being sufferers in consequence of it. Intemperance lays the foundation for many painful and dangerous diseases. Every species of malevolence and inhumanity consists of uneasy sensations, and exposes the person in whom they are predominant to the hatred and ill offices



offices of his fellow creatures. Want of veracity destroys a man's credit in society ; and all vices, in general, make men subject to contempt, or dislike ; whereas the habitual practice of the contrary virtues promotes health of body and peace of mind ; and in general, they insure to him the esteem and good offices of all those with whom he is connected.

Now, since these evils which attend upon vice, and this happiness which results from virtue are the divine appointment (since they take place in consequence of his constitution of the course of nature) they may be considered as the natural punishments of vice, and the natural rewards of virtue, distributed according to the rules of justice and equity, and intended to inculcate the most useful moral lessons on all his intelligent offspring, the subjects of his moral government.

We, also, see something like the exercise of *mercy* in the conduct of the divine provi-

providence ; since the natural punishments of vice seldom take place immediately, but leave a man room to recollect, and recover himself; and, if, after a man *has* been addicted to vice, he become truly reformed, the inconveniences he has brought upon himself are, in general, either removed, or mitigated ; so that he finds his condition the better for it.

It may, also, according to the reasoning applied in a former case, be considered as an argument for all the perfections of God, that we are so formed, that we cannot but approve of, and esteem every branch of virtue, For it cannot be supposed that our maker would have formed us in such a manner, as that he himself should be the object of our dislike and abhorrence. Our natural love of goodness and virtue, therefore, is a proof that every branch of it enters into the character of the divine being, and consequently that those qualities are the objects of his favour and approbation.

Since,

Since, however, all the moral perfections of God are derived from his benevolence ; so that holiness, justice, mercy, and truth, are in him only modifications, as it were, of simple goodness ; we should endeavour to conceive of him, as much as possible, according to his real nature ; considering benevolence as his sole ruling principle, and the proper spring of all his actions. This is, also, the most *honourable* and the most *amiable* light in which we can view him, remembering that goodness necessarily implies what we call justice, though its more natural form be that of mercy,

Upon the whole, it must be acknowledged, that it is but a very imperfect idea that we can form of the *moral* perfections of God from the light of nature. It hardly amounts to what may be called an idea of his *character*. We know nothing of God by the light of nature, but through the medium of his works ; and these are such as we cannot fully comprehend ;

hend ; both the efficient and the final causes being, in many cases, unknown to us : whereas the clearer ideas we have of the characters of men are acquired from a reflection upon such parts of their conduct as we can both fully comprehend, and are capable of ourselves ; so that we can tell precisely how we should *feel* and be disposed, if we acted in the same manner. The knowledge, also, of the *manner in which men express themselves*, upon known occasions, is a great help to us in judging of what they feel, and consequently in investigating their proper character ; and this is an advantage of which we are intirely destitute, with respect to God, on the principles of the light of nature. It is from *revelation* chiefly, if not only, that we get a just idea of what we may call the proper character of the divine being. There we may both hear his declarations, and see various specimens of his conduct, with respect to a variety of persons and occasions ; by which means we have the best opportunity of entering,  
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as it were, into his sentiments, perceiving his disposition, learning what are the objects of his approbation or dislike, in short, of gaining a proper and distinct idea of his *moral character*.

PART

## P A R T II.

OF THE DUTY, AND FUTURE EXPECTA-  
TIONS OF MANKIND.

## S E C T I O N I.

*Of the rule of right and wrong.*

**H**A V I N G seen what it is that nature teaches us concerning GOD, our next inquiry respects the proper *rule of human conduct*, and our *expectations*, grounded upon that conduct. No man comes into the world to be idle. Every man is furnished with a variety of passions, which will continually engage him in some pursuit or other; and the great question we have to decide is what passions we ought to indulge, and what pursuits we ought

ought to engage in. Now there are several very proper rules by which to form our judgment in this case ; because there are several just objects that we ought to have in view in our conduct. It is very happy, however, that this variety in our views can never mislead us, since all the great ends we ought to keep in view are all gained by the same means. They are, therefore, like so many different clues to lead to the same end ; and in the following inquiry I shall make use of any one of them, or all of them, as it may happen that, in any particular case, they can be applied to the most advantage.

Strictly speaking, there are no more than two just and independent rules of human conduct, according to the light of nature, one of which is obedience to the will of God, and the other a regard to our own real happiness ; for another rule, which is a regard to the good of others, exactly coincides with a regard to the will of God ; since all that we know of the  
will

will of God, according to the light of nature, is his desire that all his creatures should be happy, and therefore that they should all contribute to the happiness of each other. In revelation we learn the will of God in a more direct method, and then obedience to God, and a regard to the good of others will be distinct and independent principles of action, though they both enjoin the same thing. The fourth, and last rule of human conduct, is a regard to the dictates of *conscience*. But this is only the substitute of the other principles, and, in fact, arises from them ; prompting to right conduct on emergencies, where there is no time for reasoning or reflection ; and where, consequently, no proper rule of conduct could be applied.

Having thus pointed out the proper distinction and connection of these rules, I shall consider each of them separately. The first object of inquiry, in order to investigate the proper rule of right and  
wrong



wrong, is what kind of conduct the divine being most approves.

Now the divine being, whose own object, as has been shewn, is the happiness of his creatures, will certainly most approve of those sentiments, and of that conduct of ours, by which that happiness is best provided for; and this conduct must deserve to be called *right* and *proper* in the strictest sense of the words. If we examine the workmanship of any artist, our only rule of judging of what is right or wrong, with respect to it, is its fitness to answer his design in making it. Whatever, in its structure, is adapted to gain that end, we immediately pronounce to be *as it should be*, and whatever obstructs its design, tendency, and operation, we pronounce to be wrong, and to want correction. The same method of judging may be transferred to the works of God; so that whatever it be, in the sentiments or conduct of men, that concurs with, and promotes the design of our maker,

maker, we must pronounce to be, therefore, *right* ; and whatever tends to thwart and obstruct his end, we ought to call *wrong* : because, when the former prevails, the great object of the whole system is gained ; whereas, when the latter takes place, that end and design is defeated.

2. On the other hand, if we were to form a rule for our conduct independent of any regard to the divine being, we should certainly conclude that it is the part of wisdom, to provide for our greatest happiness ; and, consequently, that we should cherish those sentiments, and adopt that conduct, by which it will be best secured. But this rule must coincide with the former ; because our happiness is an object with the divine being no less than it is with ourselves ; for it has been shewn, that benevolence is the spring of all his actions, and that he made us to be happy.

3. Since,

3. Since, however, the divine goodness is general, and impartial; and he must, consequently, prefer the happiness of the *whole*, to that of any *individuals*, it cannot be his pleasure, that we should consult our own interest, at the expence of that of others. Considering ourselves, therefore, not as separate individuals, but as members of society, another object that we ought to have in view is the welfare of our fellow creatures, and of mankind at large. But still there is no real disagreement among these different rules of conduct, because we are so made, as social beings, that every man provides the most effectually for his own happiness, when he cultivates those sentiments, and pursues that conduct, which, at the same time, most eminently conduce to the welfare of those with whom he is connected. Such is the wisdom of this admirable constitution, that every individual of the system gains his own ends, and those of his maker, by the same means.

The last rule is *conscience*, which is the result of a great variety of impressions, the conclusions of our own minds, and the opinions of others, respecting what is right and fit in our conduct, forming a set of maxims which are ready to be applied upon every emergency, where there would be no time for reason or reflection. Conscience, being a principle thus formed, is properly considered as a *substitute* for the three other rules, viz. a regard to the will of God, to our own greatest happiness, and the good of others, and it is, in fact, improved and corrected from time to time by having recourse to these rules. This principle of conscience, therefore, being, as it were, the result of all the other principles of our conduct united, must deserve to be considered as the guide of life, together with them; and its dictates, though they vary, in some measure, with education, and will be found to be, in some respects, different among different nations of the world, yet, in general, evidently concur in giving their



their sanction to the same rules of conduct, that are suggested by the three before mentioned considerations. For, if we consider what kind of sentiments and conduct mankind in general will, without much reflection, and without hesitation, pronounce to be right; if we consider what are the actions that we must esteem and admire in others, and that we reflect upon with the most satisfaction in ourselves, they will appear to be the same with those which tend to make ourselves and others the most truly happy.

Following these four guides, we shall find that temperance, or the due government of our passions, with respect to ourselves; justice, benevolence, and veracity with respect to others; together with gratitude, obedience, and resignation to God, ought to be most assiduously cultivated by us; as what are, at the same time, the most pleasing to our maker, the most conducive to our own happiness, and that of others, and the most agreeable to the natural

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tural and unperverted dictates of conscience.

That we are capable of governing ourselves by these rules, and, from a proper regard to motives, can voluntarily chuse and pursue that course of life which the will of God, a regard to our own happiness, to the good of society, and the dictates of our consciences, uniformly recommend to us, is sometimes expressed by saying that *we are the proper subjects of moral government*. Unless we suppose that men have this voluntary power over their actions, whereby they can, at pleasure, either obey or disobey the proper rule of life; that is, unless they be so constituted, that the proper motives to right conduct can have a sufficient influence upon their minds, all religion is in vain. To what purpose can it be to give men a law, which it is not in their power to observe; or what propriety can there be either in rewarding them for actions to which they could not contribute, or in punishing

punishing them for offences which they could not help. We may, therefore, take it for granted, as the first, and most fundamental principle of all religion ; as necessary to our being the proper subjects of moral government, that we are equally capable of intending and doing both good and evil ; and therefore that is not in vain that laws are proposed to us, and motives are laid before us, both to persuade us to what is right, and to dissuade us from what is wrong, since it depends upon ourselves, whether we will be influenced by them or not.

If we observe the proper rules of conduct, or the law of our natures, we shall secure to ourselves many solid advantages ; and if we do not observe them, we entail upon ourselves many evils. These are, therefore, called the *punishments of vice*, and the former the *rewards of virtue* ; and since they are dispensed by the providence of God, and take place according to his appointment, in the con-

stitution of the course of nature; he is properly considered as our *moral governor*, and *judge*, and we are said to be *accountable* to him for our conduct.

From a regard to the four rules of right and wrong, explained above, I shall now endeavour to analyze the sentiments, the passions, and affections of mankind, and lay down particular rules for our conduct in life.

## SECTION II.

*Of the different objects of pursuit, and the different passions and affections of men corresponding to them.*

**I**N order to form a proper judgment concerning the conduct of man, as an individual, and a member of society, according to the rules above laid down, it will be necessary to have a just idea of, and to keep in view, the different objects  
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of our pursuit, and the different passions and affections of our nature corresponding to them.

We find ourselves placed in a world, in which we are surrounded by a variety of objects, which are capable of giving us pleasure and pain; and finding by our own experience, and the information of others, in what manner each of them is adapted to affect us, we learn to desire some of them, and feel an aversion to others. To these desires and aversions we give the name of *passions* or *affections*, and we generally class them according to the objects to which they correspond. These passions and affections are the springs of all our actions, and by their means we are engaged in a variety of interesting pursuits through the whole course of our lives. When we succeed in our pursuits, or are in hopes of succeeding, we are happy; and when we are disappointed in our schemes, or in fear of being so, we are unhappy.

1. The first and lowest class of our desires is that by which we are prompted to seek after corporeal or sensual pleasure, and consequently to avoid bodily pain. These *appetites*, as they are usually called, to distinguish them from passions of a more refined nature, are common with us and the brutes ; and to all appearance they are possessed of them in as high a degree as we are, and are capable of receiving as much pleasure from them as we are. Indeed, the *final cause*, or the *object* of these appetites is the very same with respect to both, namely, the continuance of life, and the propagation of the species. It was necessary, therefore, that all animals, which have equally their own subsistence, and the continuance of their species to provide for, should be equally furnished with them.

2. It happens, from a variety of causes, that pleasurable ideas are transferred, by association, upon objects which have not, originally, and in themselves, the power  
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of gratifying any of our senses ; as those which give us the ideas that we call *beautiful* or *sublime*, particularly those that occur in works of genius, strokes of wit, and in the polite arts of music, painting, and poetry. Our capacity for enjoying pleasures of this kind, depending upon the association of our ideas, and requiring such advances in intellectual life as brutes are incapable of, they are, therefore, classed under the general denomination of *intellectual pleasures* (a name which we give to all our pleasures, except those of sense) and more particularly under the head of *pleasures of imagination* ; because the greater part of them are founded on those resemblances of things, which are perceived and recollected by that modification of our intellectual powers which we call *fancy*.

3. Another class of our passions may be termed the *social*, because they arise from our connections with our fellow creatures of mankind; and these are of two

kinds, consisting either in our desire of their good opinion, or in our wishing their happiness or misery. In this latter species of the class, we also comprize gratitude for the favours, and a resentment of the wrongs we receive from them.

Those affections of the mind which respect the divine being belong to this class, the object of them being one with whom we have the most intimate connection, to whom we are under the greatest obligation, and whose approbation is of the greatest importance to us. All the difference there is between our affections, considered as having God or man for their object, arises from the difference of their situation with respect to us. The divine being, standing in no need of our services, is, therefore, no object of our benevolence, properly so called; but the sentiments of reverence, love, and confidence, with respect to God, are of the same nature with those which we exercise towards our fellow creatures, only infinitely exceeding



ceeding them in *degree*, as the divine power, wisdom, and goodness, infinitely exceed every thing of the same kind in man.

Some of the brutes, living in a kind of imperfect society, and particularly domestick animals, are capable of several of the passions belonging to this class, as gratitude, love, hatred, &c. but having only a small degree of intellect, they are hardly capable of those which have for their object the esteem or good opinion of others; which seem to require a considerable degree of refinement. We see, however, in horses, and some other animals, the strongest emulation, by which they will exert themselves to the utmost in their endeavours to surpass, and overcome others.

4. A fourth set of passions is that which has for its object our own *interest* in general, and is called *self love*. This seems to require a considerable degree of refinement, and therefore it is probable that

brute animals have no idea of it. Their chief object is the gratification of their appetites or passions, without reflecting upon their *happiness in general*, or having any such thing in view in their actions.

There is a lower kind of self interest, or rather *selfishness*, the object of which is the means of procuring those gratifications to which money can be subservient; and from loving money as a *means* of procuring a variety of pleasures and conveniences, a man may at length come to pursue it as an *end*, and without any regard to the proper use of it. It then becomes a new kind of passion, quite distinct from any other; insomuch, that, in order to indulge it, many persons will deprive themselves of every natural gratification.

5. Lastly, as soon as we begin to distinguish among our actions, and are sensible that there are reasons for some of them, and against others, we get a notion of some of them as what *ought* to be performed.

formed, and of others of them as what are, or ought to be refrained from. In this manner we get the abstract ideas of *right and wrong* in human actions, and a variety of pleasing circumstances attending the former, and disagreeable ones accompanying the latter, we come in time to love some kinds of actions, and to abhor others, without regard to any other consideration. For the same reason certain tempers, or dispositions of mind, as leading to certain kinds of conduct, become the objects of this moral approbation, or disapprobation; and from the whole, arises what we call a *moral sense*, or a love of virtue and a hatred of vice in the abstract. This is the greatest refinement of which we are capable, and in the due exercise and gratification of it consists the highest perfection and happiness of our natures.

## SECTION III.

*Of the ruling passion, and an estimate of the propriety and value of the different pursuits of mankind.*

**H**AVING given this general delineation of the various passions and affections of human nature, which may be called the springs of all our actions (since every thing that we do is something that we are prompted to by one or more of them,) I shall now proceed to examine them separately, in order to ascertain how far we ought to be influenced by any of them, and in what cases, or degrees, the indulgence of any of them becomes wrong and criminal.

Actuated as we are by a variety of passions, it can hardly be, but that some of them will have more influence over us than others. These are sometimes called  
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*ruling passions*, because, whenever it happens that the gratification of some interferes with that of others, all the rest will give place to these. If; for instance, any man's ruling passion be the love of money, he will deny himself any of the pleasures of life for the sake of it; whereas, if the love of pleasure were his ruling passion, he would often run the risk of impoverishing himself, rather than not procure his favourite indulgence.

It must be of great importance, therefore, to know which ought to be our ruling passions through life, or what are those gratifications and pursuits to which we ought to sacrifice every thing else. This is the object of our present inquiry, in conducting which we must consider how far the indulgence of any particular passion is consistent with our regard to the four rules of conduct that have been explained; namely, the will of God, our own best interest, the good of others, and the natural dictates of our conscience; and

in estimating the value of any particular enjoyment, with respect to the happiness we receive from it, we must consider how great or intense it is, how long it will continue, whether we regard the nature of the sense from which it is derived, or the opportunities we may have of procuring the gratification of it, and lastly, how far it is consistent, or inconsistent, with other pleasures of our nature, more or less valuable than itself.

§ 1. *Of the pleasures of sense.*

Since no appetite or passion belonging to our frame was given us in vain, we may conclude, that there cannot be any thing wrong in the simple gratification of *any* desire that our maker has implanted in us, under certain limitations and in certain circumstances; and if we consider the proper object of any of our appetites, or the end it is calculated to answer, it will be a rule for us in determining how far the divine being intended that they should be indulged.

indulged. Now some of our sensual appetites have for their proper object the support of life, and others the propagation of the species. They should, therefore, be indulged as far as is necessary for these purposes, and where the indulgence is not so excessive, or so circumstanced, as to interfere with the greater good of ourselves and others.

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1. But to make the gratification of our senses our *primary* pursuit, must be absurd; for the appetite for food is given us for the sake of supporting life, and not life for the sake of consuming food. The like may be said of other sensual appetites. Since, therefore, we certainly err from the intention of nature when we make that an *end*, which was plainly meant to be no more than a *means* to some farther end; whatever this great end of life be, we may conclude that it cannot be the gratification of our sensual appetites, for they themselves are only a means to something else.

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2. To make the gratification of our bodily senses the chief end of living would tend to defeat itself; for a man who should have no other end in view would be apt so to overcharge and surfeit his senses, that they would become indisposed for their proper functions, and indulgence would occasion nothing but a painful loathing. By intemperance also in eating and drinking, and in all other corporeal pleasures, the powers of the body itself are weakened, and a foundation is laid for disorders the most loathsome to behold, the most painful to endure, and the most fatal in their tendencies and issues. The ingenuity of man cannot contrive any torture so exquisite, and at the same time of so long continuance, as those which are occasioned by the irregular indulgence of the senses; whereas temperance, and occasional abstinence, is a means of keeping all the bodily organs and senses in their proper tone, disposed to relish their proper gratifications; so that they shall give a man the most true  
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and exquisite enjoyment even of sensual pleasure. They prolong life to the utmost term of nature, and contribute to a peaceful and easy death.

3. An addictedness to sensual pleasure blunts the faculties of the mind, being injurious to mental apprehension, and all the finer feelings of the soul, and consequently deprives a man of a great many sources of pleasures which he might otherwise enjoy, and particularly of that most valuable complacency which he might have in his own dispositions and conduct; from a proper and temperate use of the good things of life.

4. Sensual indulgences, though, to a certain degree, and in certain circumstances, they seem to promote benevolence, are evidently unfriendly to it when carried beyond that degree; for though moderate eating and drinking in company promotes cheerfulness, and good humour, excess frequently gives occasion to quarrelling

relling and contention, and sometimes even to murder. Also, when a man makes the indulgence of his appetites his primary pursuit, besides incapacitating himself for the service of mankind in any important respect, he will scruple no means, however base, cruel, or unjust, to procure himself his favourite pleasures, which he conceives to be in a manner necessary to his being.

5. With respect to the bulk of mankind, whose circumstances in life are low, the sole pursuit of sensual pleasure is exceedingly injurious to that industry which is necessary to their support. Indeed, it is often sufficient to dissipate the most ample fortune, and reduce men from affluence to poverty, which, in such circumstances, they are least able to struggle with.

It is impossible that we should not condemn a disposition and pursuit so circumstanced as this. An addictedness to sensual pleasures is manifestly incompatible with  
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our own true interest, it is injurious to others, and, on both these accounts, must be contrary to the will of God. The vices of gluttony, drunkenness, and lewdness are also, clearly contrary to the natural dictates of our minds; and every man who is guilty of them, feels himself to be despicable and criminal, both in his own eyes, and those of others.

The only rule with respect to our *diet*, is to prefer those kinds, and that quantity of food, which most conduces to the health and vigour of our bodies. Whatever in eating or drinking is inconsistent with, and obstructs this end, is wrong, and should carefully be avoided; and every man's own experience, assisted with a little information from others, will be sufficient to inform him what is nearly the best for himself in both those respects; so that no person is likely to injure himself much through mere mistake.

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With respect to those appetites that are subservient to the propagation of the species, I would observe, that the experience of ages testifies, that *marriage*, at a proper time of life, whereby one man is confined to one woman, is most favourable to health and the true enjoyment of life. It is a means of raising the greatest number of healthy children, and makes the best provision for their instruction and settlement in life; and nothing more need be said to shew that this state of life has every character of what is right, and what ought to be adopted, in preference to every other mode of indulging our natural passions.

Marriage is, moreover, of excellent use as a means of transferring our affections from ourselves to others. We see, not in extraordinary cases, but generally, in common life, that a man even prefers the happiness of his wife and children to his own; and his regard for them is frequently a motive to such industry, and such an exertion



exertion of his powers, as would make him exceedingly unhappy, if it were not for the consideration of the benefit that accrues to them from it. Nay, in many cases, we see men risking their lives, and even rushing on certain death, in their defence. The same, also, is generally the attachment of wives to their husbands, and sometimes, but not so generally, the attachment of children to their parents.

We may add, that when once a man's affections have been transferred from himself to others, even his wife and children, they are more easily extended to other persons, still more remote from him, and that, by this means, he is in the way of acquiring a principle of general benevolence, patriotism, and public spirit, which persons who live to be old without ever marrying are not so generally remarkable for. The attention of these persons having been long confined to themselves, they often grow more and more selfish and narrow spirited, so as to be actuated in all  
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their pursuits by a joyless desire of accumulating what they cannot consume themselves, and what they must leave to those who they know, have but little regard for them, and for whom they have but little regard.

A series of family cases (in which a considerable degree of anxiety and painful sympathy have a good effect) greatly improves, and as it were *mellows*, the mind of man. It is a kind of exercise and discipline, which eminently fits him for great and generous conduct; and, in fact, makes him a superior kind of being, with respect to the generality of those who have had no family connections.

On the other hand, a course of lewd indulgence, without family cases, sinks a man below his natural level. Promiscuous commerce gives an indelible vicious taint to the imagination, so that, to the latest term of life, those ideas will be predominant, which are proper only to youthful

youthful vigour. And what in nature is more wretched, absurd, and despicable ; than to have the mind continually haunted with the idea of pleasures which cannot be enjoyed ; and which ought to have been long abandoned, for entertainments more suited to years ; and from which, if persons had been properly trained, they would, in the course of nature, have been prepared to receive much greater and superior satisfaction.

Besides, all the pleasures of the sexes in the human species, who cannot sink themselves so low as the brutes, depend much upon *opinion*, or particular mental attachment ; and consequently, they are greatly heightened by sentiments of *love* and *affection*, which have no place with common prostitutes, or concubines, where the connection is only occasional or temporary, and consequently slight. Those persons, therefore, who give themselves up to the lawless indulgence of their passions, besides being exposed to the most loathsome  
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and painful disorders, besides exhausting the powers of nature prematurely, and subjecting themselves to severe remorse of mind, have not (whatever they may fancy or pretend) any thing like the real pleasure and satisfaction that persons generally have in the married state.

§ 2. *Of the pleasures of imagination,*

As we ought not to make the gratification of our external senses the main end of life, so neither ought we to indulge our taste for the more refined pleasures, those called the pleasures of imagination, without some bounds. The cultivation of a taste for propriety, beauty, and sublimity, in objects natural or artificial, particularly for the pleasures of music, painting, and poetry, is very proper in younger life; as it serves to draw off the attention from gross animal gratifications, and to bring us a step farther into intellectual life; so as to lay a foundation for higher attainments. But if we stop here, and devote  
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our whole time, and all our faculties to these objects, we shall certainly fall short of the proper end of life.

1. These objects, in general, only give pleasure to a certain degree, and are a source of more pain than pleasure when a person's taste is arrived to a certain pitch of correctness and delicacy: for then hardly any thing will please, but every thing will give disgust that comes not up to such an ideal standard of perfection as few things in this world ever reach: so so that, upon the whole, in this life, at least in this country, a person whose taste is no higher than a *mediocrity* stands the best chance for enjoying the pleasures of imagination; and consequently all the time and application that is more than necessary to acquire this mediocrity of taste, or excellence in the arts respecting it, are wholly lost.

Since, however, the persons and objects with which a man is habitually conversant,

fant, are much in his own power, a considerable refinement of taste may not, perhaps, in all cases, impair the happiness of life, but, under the direction of prudence may multiply the pleasures of it, and give a person a more exquisite enjoyment of it.

2. Very great refinement of taste, and great excellence in those arts which are the object of it, are the parents of such excessive *vanity*, as exposes a man to a variety of mortifications, and disappointments in life. They are also very apt to produce envy, jealousy, peevishness, malice, and other dispositions of mind, which are both uneasy to a man's self, and disqualify him for contributing to the pleasure and happiness of others. This is more especially the case where a man's excellence lies chiefly in a single thing, which, from confining his attention to it, will be imagined to be of extraordinary consequence, while every other kind of excellence will be undervalued.

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3. With respect to many persons, a great refinement of taste is attended with the same inconveniences as an addictedness to sensual pleasure; for it is apt to lead them into many expences, and make them despise plain honest industry; whereby they are frequently brought into a state of poverty, surrounded with a thousand artificial wants, and without the means of gratifying them.

A taste for the pleasures of imagination ought, more particularly, to be indulged, and even encouraged, in younger life, in the interval between a state of mere animal nature, in a child, and the serious pursuits of manhood. It is also a means of relaxing the mind from too close attention to serious business, through the whole of life, promoting innocent amusement, chearfulness, and good humour. Besides, a taste for natural, and also for artificial propriety, beauty, and sublimity, has a connection with a taste for moral propriety, moral beauty, and dignity;

and when properly cultivated, enables us to take more pleasure in the contemplation of the works, perfections, and providence of God. Here, indeed, it is, that a just taste for these refined pleasures finds its highest and most perfect gratification for it is in these contemplations, that instances of the most exquisite propriety, beauty, and grandeur occur.

### § 3. *Of self interest.*

A regard to our greatest happiness was allowed before to be one of the proper rules of our conduct; but at the same time it was shewn to be only one of four; and in fact the proper end of it, or our greatest happiness as individuals, is most effectually gained, when it is not itself the immediate scope of our actions; that is, when we have not our interest directly in view, but when we are actuated by a disinterested regard to the good of others, to the commands of God, and to the dictates of conscience.

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1. When we keep up a regard to ourselves in our conduct, we can never exclude such a degree of anxiety, and jealousy of others, as will always make us in some degree unhappy; and we find by experience, that no persons have so true and unallayed enjoyments, as those who lose sight of themselves, and of all regard to their own happiness, in higher and greater pursuits.

2. Though it be true, that, when our interest is perfectly understood, it will be found to be best promoted by those actions which are dictated by a regard to the good of others, &c. it requires great comprehension of mind even to see this, and much more to act upon it; so that if the bulk of mankind were taught to pursue their own proper happiness, as the *ultimate end* of life, they would be led to do many things injurious to others, not being able to see how they could otherwise make the best provision for themselves.

3. If we consult the unperverted dictates of our minds, we shall feel that there is a kind of *meanness* in a man's acting from a view to his own interest only ; and if any person were known to have no higher motive for his conduct, though he should have so much comprehension of mind, as that this principle should never mislead him, and every particular action which he was led to by it should be, in itself, always right, he would not be allowed to have any *moral worth*, so as to command our *esteem* ; and he would not at all engage our *love*. All we could say in his favour would be that he was a *prudent* man, not that he was *virtuous*. Nay we should not allow that any man's conduct was even *right*, in the highest and most proper sense of the word, unless he was influenced by motives of a higher and purer nature ; namely, a regard to the will of God, to the good of others, or to the dictates of conscience.

It seems to follow from these considerations, that this principle, of a regard to our highest interest, holds a kind of *middle rank* between the vices and the virtues ; and that its principal use is to be a means of raising us above all the lower and vicious pursuits, to those that are higher, and properly speaking virtuous and praise worthy. From a regard to our true interest, or mere self love, we are first of all made sensible that we should injure ourselves by making the gratification of our senses, or the pleasures of imagination, &c. our chief pursuit, and the great business and end of life ; and we are convinced that it is our wisdom to pay a supreme regard to the will of our maker, to employ ourselves in doing good to others, and, universally, to obey the dictates of our consciences ; and this persuasion will lead us to do those things which we know to be agreeable to those higher principles, though we cannot immediately see them to be for our interest ; and, by degrees, we shall get a habit of acting in the most

pious, generous, and conscientious manner, without ever having our own happiness in view, or in the least attending to any connection, immediate or distant, that our conduct has with it.

On these accounts, it seems better not to consider any kind of self interest as an ultimate rule of our conduct ; but that, independent of any regard to our own happiness, we should think ourselves obliged conscientiously to do what is right, and generously and disinterestedly to pursue the good of others, though, to all appearance, we sacrifice our own to it ; and at all events to conform to the will of our maker, who, standing in an equal relation to all his offspring, must wish the good of them all, and therefore cannot approve of our consulting our own happiness at the expence of that of others, but must rather take pleasure in seeing us act upon the maxims of his own generous benevolence ; depending, in general, that that great, righteous, and good being, who



who approves of our conduct, will not suffer us to be losers by it upon the whole.

There is a lower species of self interest, or *selfishness*, consisting in the *love of money*, which, beyond a certain degree, is highly deserving of censure. As a means of procuring ourselves any kind of gratification, that can be purchased, the love of money is a passion of the same nature with a fondness for that species of pleasure that can be purchased with it. If, for instance, a man makes no other use of his wealth than to procure the means of sensual pleasure, the love of money, in him, is only another name for the love of pleasure. If a man accumulates money with no other view than to indulge his taste in the refined arts above mentioned, his love of money is the same thing with a love of the arts ; or lastly if a man really intends nothing but the good of others while he is amassing riches, he is actuated by the principle of benevolence. In short, the love of money, whenever it is pursued,

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directly and properly, as *a means* to something else, is a passion, the rank of which keeps pace with the *end* that is proposed to be gained by it. But in the pursuit of riches, it is very common to forget the use of money as a means; and to desire it without any farther end, so as even to sacrifice to this pursuit all those appetites and passions, to the gratification of which it was originally subservient, and for the sake of which only it was originally coveted. In this state the love of money, or the passion we call *covetousness*, is evidently absurd and wrong.

This gross self interest, which consists in an excessive love of money, as an end, and without any regard to its use, will sometimes bring a man to abridge himself of all the natural enjoyments of life, and engage him in the most laborious pursuits, attended with most painful anxiety of mind; it very often steels his heart against all the feelings of humanity and compassion, and never fails to fill him with envy, jealousy,

jealousy, and resentment against all those whom he imagines to be his competitors and rivals. Much less does this sordid passion admit of any of the pleasures that result from a consciousness of the approbation of God, of our fellow creatures, or of our own minds, In fact, it deprives a man of all the genuine pleasures of his nature, and involves him in much perplexity and distress ; the immediate cause of which, though it be often absurd and imaginary, is serious to himself, and makes him appear in a ridiculous light to others.

All these observations, concerning the love of money, are equally true of the love of *power*, or of any thing else, that is originally desirable as a *means* to some farther end, but which afterwards becomes itself an ultimate end of our actions. It is even, in a great measure, true of the love of *knowledge* or *learning*. This is chiefly useful as a means, and is valuable in proportion to the end it is fit-

ted to answer ; but, together with the love of riches, and power, it is absurd, and to be condemned, when pursued as an end, or for its own sake only.

The amassing of money must be allowed to be reasonable, or at least *excusable*, provided there be a probability that a man may live to enjoy it, or that it may be of use to his posterity, or others in whose welfare he interests himself ; but when we see a man persisting in the accumulation of wealth, even to extreme old age, when it would be deemed madness in him to pretend that he could have any real want of it ; when he discovers the same avaricious temper though he has no children, and there is no body for whom he is known to have the least regard, it is evident that he pursues money as an *end*, or for *its own sake*, and not at all as a *means* to any thing farther. In this case, therefore, it is, without doubt, highly criminal, and deserving of the above mentioned censures.



§ 4. *Of the passions which arise from our social nature.*

The passions and affections which I have hitherto considered are those which belong to us as individuals, and do not necessarily suppose any relation to other beings, I shall now proceed to treat of those which are of this latter class, and first of the pleasure that we take in the good opinion of others concerning us, which gives rise to that passion which we call the *love of fame*.

This is a passion that discovers itself pretty early in life, and arises principally from our experience and observation of the many advantages that result from the good opinion of others. In the early part of life this principle is of signal use to us, as a powerful incentive to those actions which procure us the esteem of our fellow creatures ; which are, in general, the same that are dictated by the princi-

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ples of benevolence and the moral sense, and also by a regard to the will of God.

But though, by this account, the love of fame is an useful *ally* to virtue, the gratification of it ought by no means to be made our primary pursuit; because, if it were known that *fame* was the sole end of a man's actions, he would be so far from gaining this end, that he would be despised by mankind in general; and especially if he were advanced in life, when it is commonly expected that men should be governed by higher and better principles. For no actions are looked upon by the bulk of mankind as properly praise worthy, but those which proceed from a principle of disinterested benevolence, obedience to God, or a regard to conscience.

2. Besides, *humility* is a principal subject of praise; and, indeed, without this, no other virtue is held in much esteem. Now this humility supposes such a diffidence of ones self, such a readiness to acknowledge

knowledge the superiority of others, and also so small a degree of complacence in the contemplation of our own excellencies, as must be inconsistent with our making this pleasure our chief pursuit, and the source of our greatest happiness.

3. In another respect, also, the love of fame, as a primary object of pursuit, tends to defeat itself. We are not pleased with praise, except it come from persons of whose *judgment*, as well as *sincerity* we have a good opinion ; but the love of fame, as our supreme good, tends to beget such a degree of *self sufficiency*, and conceit, as makes us despise the rest of mankind, that is, it makes their praise of little value to us ; so that the sprightly pleasures of *vanity* naturally give place in time to all the fullness and moroseness of *pride*.

4. If a man have no other object than reputation or popularity, he will be led to dwell frequently upon the subject of  
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his own merit, of which he will, consequently, entertain an overweening and unreasonable opinion; and this can hardly fail to produce, besides a most ridiculous degree of conceit, so much envy and jealousy, as will make him insufferable in society, and subject him to the most cutting mortifications.

5. If a man's principal object be those qualifications and actions which usually distinguish men, and make them much talked of, both in their own and future ages, such as eminence with respect to genius, excellence in the polite arts, discoveries in science, or great achievements in the arts of peace or war, his chance of succeeding is very small; for it is not possible that more than a *few* persons, in comparison, can draw the attention of the rest of mankind upon them. And besides that the qualifications which are the foundation of this eminence are very rare among mankind, success depends upon the concurrence of many *circumstances*,  
independent



independent on a man's self. It is plain, therefore, that very few persons can reasonably hope to distinguish themselves in this manner, and it would certainly be very wrong to propose that as a principal object of pursuit to all mankind, which the bulk of them cannot possibly obtain, or enjoy.

The proper use of this love of fame, as of the principle of self interest, is to be a means of bringing us within the influence of better and truly virtuous principles, in consequence of begetting a habit of doing the same things which better principles would prompt to. If, for instance, a man should, first of all, perform acts of charity and beneficence from ostentation only, the joy that he actually communicates to others, and the praises he receives for his generosity, from those who are strangers to his real motive, cannot but give him an idea of the purer pleasures of genuine benevolence, from which, and not from a desire of applause only, he will for the future act. The

The pleasures that accrue to us from the pursuit of fame, like those of self interest, are best gained by persons who have them not directly in view. The man who is truly benevolent, pious, and conscientious, will, in general, secure the most solid and permanent reputation with mankind; and if he be so situated that the practice of any real virtue shall be deemed unfashionable, and subject him to contempt and insult, he will have acquired that *superiority of mind*, which will set him above it; so that he will not feel any pain from the want of such esteem, as must have been purchased by the violation, or neglect of his duty. But he will rather applaud himself, and rejoice that he is not esteemed by persons of certain characters, be they ever so numerous, and distinguished on certain accounts; finding more than an equivalent recompence in the approbation of his own mind, in the esteem of the wise and good, though they be ever so few, and especially in the favour of God, who is the searcher of hearts,

hearts, the best judge, and most munificent rewarder of real worth.

§ 5. *Of the sympathetic affections.*

A passion for fame, though it be founded on the relation that men stand in to one another, and therefore supposes society, is of a very different nature from the *social principle*, properly so called ; or a disposition to love, and to do kind offices to our fellow creatures.

1. That it is with the greatest justice that this is ranked among our highest pursuits has been shewn already. That the study to do good to others, is placed in this rank must be perfectly agreeable to the will of God, who cannot but intend the happiness of all his offspring, and who is himself actuated by the principle of universal benevolence. If we consult the natural dictates of our conscience, we shall find that it gives the strongest approbation to disinterested benevolence

nevolence in ourselves or others ; and if we examine how our own highest interest is affected by it ; we shall find that, in general, the more exalted is our benevolence, and the more we lay ourselves out to promote the good of others, the more perfect enjoyment we have of ourselves, and the more we are in the way of receiving good offices from others in return ; and, upon the whole, the happier we are likely to be.

2. A man of a truly benevolent disposition, and who makes the good of others the object of his pursuit, will never want opportunities of employing and gratifying himself : for we are so connected with and dependent upon one another, the small upon the great, and the great upon the small, that, whatever be a man's station in life, if he be of a benevolent disposition, it will always be in his power to oblige others, and thereby indulge himself.

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3. A person so benevolent may, in general, depend upon success in his schemes, because mankind are previously disposed to approve, recommend, and countenance benevolent undertakings ; and though such a person will see much misery and distress, which he cannot relieve, and which will, consequently, give him some pain ; yet, upon the whole, his pleasures will be far superior to it ; and the pains of sympathy do not, in general, agitate the mind beyond the limits of pleasure. We have even a kind of satisfaction with ourselves in contemplating scenes of distress, though we can only *wish* to relieve the unhappy sufferers. For this reason it is that tragic scenes, and tragical stories are so engaging. This kind of satisfaction has even more charms for mankind in general than the view of many pleasing scenes of life.

4. Besides if to the principle of benevolence be added a strict regard to conscience, and confidence in divine providence, all the pains of sympathy will almost wholly

wholly vanish. If we are conscious that we do all we can to assist and relieve others, we may have perfect satisfaction in ourselves, and may habitually rejoice in the belief of the wisdom and goodness of God ; being convinced that all the evils, which we ineffectually strive to remove, are appointed for wise and good purposes ; and that, being of a temporary nature, they will finally be absorbed in that infinity of happiness, to which, though in ways unknown to us, we believe them to be subservient.

Every argument by which benevolence is recommended to us condemns *malevolence*, or a disposition to rejoice in the misery, and to grieve at the happiness of others. This baleful disposition may be generated by frequently considering our own interest as in opposition to that of others. For, in this case, at the same time that we receive pleasure from our own gain, we receive pleasure also from their loss, which is connected with it ; and for the same reason, when we grieve for our  
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own loss, we grieve at their gain. In this manner emulation, envy, jealousy, and at length actual hatred, and malice, are produced in our hearts.

It is for this reason that *gaming* is unfavourable to benevolence, as well as other virtues, and high gaming exceedingly pernicious. For, in this case, every man's gain is directly produced by another's loss; so that the gratification of the one and the disappointment of the other must always go together. Indeed, upon the same just principle, all trade and commerce, all buying and selling, is wrong, unless it be to the advantage of both parties.

Malevolent dispositions, besides that they are clearly contrary to the will of God, and the dictates of conscience, are the source of much pain and misery to ourselves. They consist of very uneasy feelings; so that no man can be happy, or enjoy any satisfaction, while he is under the influence of them. Even the pleasures

pleasures of revenge are shocking to think of, and what a man must despise himself for being capable of relishing and enjoying; and, they are, in all cases, infinitely inferior to the noble satisfaction which a man feels in forgiving an injury. There is a meanness in the former, but true greatness of mind, and real dignity in the latter, and the pleasure which it gives does not pall upon reflection. Besides, a disposition to do ill offices to others exposes a man to the hatred and ill offices of others. The malevolent man arms all mankind against him.

Anger, indeed, is in some cases, reasonable; as when it is directed against the vicious, and injurious, who are the pests of society; so that being enemies to such persons is being friends to mankind at large. But here great caution should be used, lest this passion of anger should, as it is very capable of doing, degenerate into pure ill will towards those who are the objects of it. Nay we should never indulge



dulge to anger so far as to cease to have the real good and welfare of the offender at heart, but be ready even to do our greatest personal enemies any kind office in our power, provided that the consequence of it would not be injurious to society. This, indeed, is what the law of universal benevolence plainly requires, as it strictly forbids the doing any *unnecessary* evil; and that evil is unnecessary, which the good and happiness of others does not require. If, therefore, we would appear to act upon this principle, we must be careful so to conduct our resentment, that it may be manifest, that it is with reluctance that we entertain sentiments of enmity.

If it be our duty to bear good will even to our enemies, much more should we exercise it to our real friends, and use our endeavours to make the most ample return for any kindness that they do to us. Indeed there is no virtue which has a stronger testimony in the consciences of all men,

than *gratitude*, and no vice is universally so hateful as ingratitude.

If the good of society be our object, there can be no question, but that *veracity*, with respect to all our declarations, and *fidelity*, with respect to all our engagements, is one of the most important of all social duties. All the purposes of society would be defeated, if falsehood were as common as truth among mankind; and in those circumstances all beneficial intercourse would soon cease among them; and, notwithstanding temporary inconveniences may sometimes arise from a rigid adherence to truth, they are infinitely overbalanced by the many superior advantages that arise from our depending upon the regard to it being inviolable.

Since an *oath*, or an appeal to divine being, is the most deliberate, and the most solemn of all the modes of asseveration, it ought to be the most scrupulously observed. There is not, in the nature of things,

things, any stronger guard against imposition and deceit, and therefore a person who has once *perjured* himself, deserves not only to be detested, and shunned, as the bane of society, but to be expelled out of it.

§ 5. *Of the relative duties.*

As we stand in a variety of relations to one another, and have much more opportunity of doing kind offices to some than to others, we cannot suppose that the divine being intended that our benevolence should be like his own, *universal* and *impartial*. He stands in the same relation to all his creatures, and he is capable of attending to the wants of them all; whereas our beneficence is necessarily limited, and therefore should flow the most freely towards those whom we can most conveniently and effectually serve. Besides the good of the whole will be best provided for by every person making this a rule to himself; whereas, if every person,

son, without any particular regard to his own limited province, should extend his care to the wants of mankind in general, very little good would, in fact, be done by any.

The *domestic relations* of life are the foundation of the strongest claim upon our benevolence and kindness. The interests of *husband and wife* are the same, and inseparable, and they must necessarily pass a very great part of their time together. In these circumstances, to be mutually happy, their affection must be strong and undivided. The welfare of their offspring, likewise, requires this, that they may give their united care and attention to form their bodies and minds, in order to fit them for the business of life, and to introduce them with advantage into the world.

As nature makes children the charge of their parents in younger life, so it lays an equal obligation on children to provide for their parents, when they are old and infirm,



infirm, and unable to provide for themselves.

*Masters and servants* are under a variety of mutual obligations ; and if that connection be happy, and mutually advantageous, there must be justice, humanity, and liberality on the one hand, requited with fidelity, reasonable submission, and affection on the other.

Our own country, likewise, claims a particular preference. We ought to give more attention to its welfare than to that of any other country, and its magistrates are intitled to our particular reverence and respect.

It is for the good of the whole that we proportion our regards and benevolent attention in this manner, that is, regulating them, according to those connections in life that are of the most importance to our own happiness ; but still, we should never lose sight of the relation we stand in to

all mankind, and all the creation of God ; with respect to whom we are brethren, and fellow subjects ; and whenever the interest of ourselves, our own families, or country does not greatly interfere, we should lay ourselves out to do good to strangers and foreigners, or to any persons that may stand in need of our assistance ; doing to others as we would they should do to us ; which is a rule of the gospel that is perfectly agreeable to natural reason.

§ 6. *Of the Theopathic affections.*

As benevolence, or the love of mankind, so also the love of God, and devotedness to him bears every character of one of our highest and most proper principles of conduct.

1. This principle interferes with no real gratification, but in such a manner that all the restraint it lays upon any of them is, in reality, favourable to the true  
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and perfect enjoyment we derive from them. No pains that we can expose ourselves to for the sake of mortifying ourselves, can be pleasing to that being who made us to be happy, and who has, for that purpose, given us the power and the means of a variety of gratifications, suited to our state and condition. In this general manner it is shewn that the love of God, and devotedness to him, is perfectly agreeable to a regard to our own greatest good. This principle must be consistent with our attention to the good of others, because God is the father of us all, and we are equally his offspring; and nature teaches us to consider him as our father, moral governor, and judge, and therefore to reverence, love, and obey him without reserve.

2. An intire devotedness to God, faith in his providence, and resignation to his will, is the best antidote against all the evils of life. If we firmly believe that nothing comes to pass, respecting our-

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selves, our friends, and our dearest interests, but by his appointment or permission ; and that he appoints or permits nothing but for the best purposes, we shall not only *acquiesce*, but *rejoice* in all the events of life, prosperous or adverse. We shall consider every thing as a means to a great, glorious, and joyful end ; the consideration of which will reflect a lustre upon every thing that leads to it, that has any connection with it, or the most distant reference to it.

3. Other affections may not always find their proper gratification, and therefore may be the occasion of *pain* as well as of *pleasure* to us. Even the most benevolent purposes are frequently disappointed, and without faith in the providence of God, who has the good of all his offspring at heart, would be a source of much sorrow and disquiet to us. But the man whose supreme delight arises from the sense of his relation to his maker, from contemplating his perfections, his works,  
and



and his providence ; and who has no will but his, must be possessed of a never failing source of joy and satisfaction. Every object that occurs to a person of this disposition will be viewed in the most favourable light ; and whether it be immediately, pleasurable or painful, the relation it bears to God, and his moral government, will make it welcome to him.

4. If we consider the foundation of the duty and affection we owe to God upon the natural principles of right and equity, in the same manner as, from the same natural dictates, we judge of the duty we owe to mankind, we cannot but readily conclude, that, if a *human* father, benefactor, governor, and judge, is intitled to our love, reverence, and obedience ; he who is, in a much higher and a more perfect sense, our father, benefactor, governor, and judge, must be intitled to a greater portion of our love, reverence, and obedience ; because, in all these relations, he has done, and is continually do-

ing more to deserve them. Considering what we have received, and what we daily receive from God, even life and all the powers and enjoyments of it; considering our present privileges, and our future hopes, it is impossible that our attention, attachment, submission, and confidence, should exceed what is reasonable and properly due to him.

In the regulation of our devotion, we should carefully avoid both *enthusiasm* and *superstition*, as they both arise from unworthy notions of God, and his moral government. The former consists in a childish fondness, familiarity, and warmth of passion, and an aptness, on that account, to imagine that we are the peculiar favourites of the divine being, who is the father, friend, and moral governor of all his creatures. Besides this violent affection cannot, in its own nature, be of long continuance. It will, of course, abate of its fervour; and those who have given way to it will be apt to think of  
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God with the other extreme of coldness and indifference; the consequence of which is often extreme dejection, fear, anxiety, and distrust; and sometimes it ends in despair, and impiety.

On the other hand, *superstition* arises from mistaking the proper object of the divine favour and approbation, for want of having a just idea of the moral perfections of God, and of the importance of real virtue. Persons of this character are extremely punctual with respect to the *means* and *circumstantials* of religion, or things that have only an imaginary relation to it, and may be quite foreign to its real nature; instead of bringing to God the devotion of the heart, and the proper fruits of it, in the faithful discharge of the duties of life, in the personal and social capacities. The omission of some mere form, or ceremony, shall give such persons more real uneasiness than the neglect of a moral duty; and when they have complied with all the forms

which they think requisite to be observed, their consciences are intirely easy, their former guilt has no pressure, and they are ready to contract new debts, to be wiped off in the same manner. Almost all the religion of the Mahometans and Papists consists in this kind of superstition, and there is too much of it in all sects and denominations of christians. I cannot give a clearer idea of the nature of superstition than by what appeared in the conduct of some Roman Catholicks in Ireland, who, I have been told, broke into a house, where they were guilty of robbery and murder, but, sitting down to regale themselves, would not taste flesh meat, because it was Friday.

There is no quality of the heart so valuable as a just and manly piety, and nothing so abject and pernicious as superstition. Superstition and enthusiasm are generally denominated the two *extremes* of religion, and in some senses they are so; but, at the same time, they have a near connection



connection with one another, and nothing is more common than for persons to pass from the one to the other, or to live under the alternate, or even the constant influence of them both, without entertaining one sentiment of generous and useful devotion. Indeed the usual ground of the presumption and rapture of the enthusiast is some external observance, or internal feeling, that can have no claim to the solid approbation of a reasonable being.

§ 7. *Of the obligation of conscience.*

In order to govern our conduct by a regard to our true interest, to the good of mankind, or the will of God, it is necessary that we use our reason, that we *think* and *reflect* before we act. Another principle, therefore, was necessary, to dictate to us on sudden *emergencies*, and to prompt us to right action *without reasoning* or thinking at all. This principle we call *conscience*, and being the natural sub-

substitute of all the three other rules of right conduct, it must have the same title to our regard. As this principle, however, is a thing of a variable nature, it must be corrected from time to time, by recurring to the principles out of which it was formed. Otherwise, as we see exemplified in fact, conscience may come to dictate things most injurious to our own good, or that of others, and even most dishonourable to God. What impurities, what ridiculous penances and mortifications, yea what villainies and cruelties do we not find to have been acted by mankind, under the notion of rendering themselves acceptable to the object of their supreme worship.

If, however, a person has been well educated in a christian and protestant country, and has lived some time under the influence of good impressions, such as are favourable to virtue and happiness, the dictates of his conscience (which has been formed from those good principles) will

will generally be right, and may be depended upon not to mislead him. At all events, it is very dangerous to slight and disregard the real dictates of our own minds, so as either to do what we have a feeling of as wrong, and what we condemn ourselves for at the time, or to forbear to do what appears to us to be right, what we ought to do, and what we feel a sudden impulse to do. For if we can disregard even an *erroneous conscience* we may come to disregard the authority of *conscience in general*, and *as such*, which after all, is the surest and best guardian of our virtue.

2. If the principle of conscience has been well formed, in consequence of a just train of sentiments, and proper impressions, since it is the result of rational self interest, benevolence, and piety, jointly, it may be considered as the very quintessence and perfection of our rational natures; so that to do a thing because it is *right*, will be to act from a nobler, and  
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more exalted principle of conduct, than any of the others. For it is, in fact, every just principle united, and reduced into one; and, on this account, it will naturally claim the preheminance over the dictates of any of them singly, supposing them to clash; and many cases may be put, in which it ought to correct and over rule any of them.

The regard I have to my own interest, believing it to be my highest, the love I bear to my fellow creatures, or even what I take to be the command of God, may dictate one thing, when my sense of right and wrong, whether natural or acquired, may dictate another; and it may be safest and best for me to follow this guide. Thus a papist may really believe that he does good to the souls, by tormenting the bodies of his fellow creatures, and thereby does God service, and that it is no sin to deceive hereticks; but if he feel an inward reluctance in pursuing persecuting measures, and cannot tell a deliberate  
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falsehood without compunction, we should not hesitate to pronounce, that he would do well to forbear that conduct, notwithstanding his belief that he is thereby consulting the good of mankind, and the glory of God; at least till he hath carefully compared the dictates of his conscience with what he imagined to be the command of God.

3. The satisfaction that results from obeying the dictates of conscience is of a solid and permanent kind, and affords consolation under all the pains and troubles of life. Whatever befall a man, if he can say that he hath done his *duty*, and can believe himself, he will not be wholly unhappy. On the other hand, the pangs of a guilty conscience are the most intolerable of all evils. One villainous action is sufficient to imbitter a man's whole life, and years of remorse will not make the reflection upon it less cutting and disquieting. All the riches, honours, and luxury of life are not sufficient to give ease to the mind

mind of that man, who thoroughly condemns and abhors himself.

4. This mechanical and necessary determination in favour of some actions, and against others, being either connate with the mind, or, which comes to the same thing, arising necessarily from our constitution, as influenced by the circumstances of our being, must have been intended for some very important purpose; and this, in its own nature, can be no other than to be the monitor and guide of life. It is, in a manner, felt to be the representative of God himself, and therefore, its sentence will be considered as the forerunner of the righteous sentence which our maker and sovereign judge will pass upon us. It is not only present pain that disquiets the guilty mind, but a dread of future and divine judgments; as, on the other hand, the approbation of our own hearts is the most pleasing feeling a man can have, not on its own account, so much as its being a kind of certificate of the divine

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vine approbation, and a foretaste of his future favour and reward.

## SECTION IV.

### *Of the means of virtue.*

**H**AVING thus shown the rank and value of all our passions and affections, or the regard that is due to each in the conduct of our lives. I shall give some practical directions, how to suppress what is irregular and vicious, and promote what is right and virtuous in us.

1. If any of our inferior passions have gained the ascendancy in us, so that a propensity to any species of indulgence is become excessive, and, in consequence of it, bad habits have been formed, it is  
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certainly a man's wisdom, as soon as he begins to suspect that he is in a wrong course, to weigh in his own mind such considerations as have been mentioned above, respecting the nature and tendency of our passions ; that he may thoroughly convince himself how foolish a part he has chosen for himself, how injurious his conduct is to others, how displeasing to his maker, and how much it is the cause of shame and remorse to himself. It is generally through want of timely *reflection*, that men abandon themselves to irregular indulgences, and contract bad habits ; so that if they would give themselves time to *think*, and consider deliberately of the nature and consequences of their conduct, they would chuse a wise and virtuous course. For no man is so infatuated as, that, when no particular temptation is present, when he is perfectly master of himself, and cannot but see what is for his true interest, purposely and knowingly to lay aside all regard to it. All mankind wish to be happy, and no man can voluntarily



voluntarily chuse to be miserable. Were any man, therefore, truly sensible, that there is no kind of vice to which he does not sacrifice either the health of his body, his reputation with the thinking part of mankind, or even his worldly interest, sometimes all these together, and always the peace and tranquillity of his mind, who would chuse to persist in it; admitting that a regard to the good of others, and to the known will of God should have no weight among them; though there are few persons, I believe, who are not more or less influenced even by these generous and disinterested considerations.

2. Particular care should be taken on our entrance into the world, that we contract no bad habits; for such is the nature of habits, that when once a man has been accustomed to any thing, it may give him the greatest pain to break himself of it, even though he have no pleasure, yea though he be really unhappy in continuing in it. Youth is, on every account, that  
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time of life which requires our greatest attention, for then only is the mind susceptible of new impressions, so as to be capable of changing for the better. When once a man's connections and mode of life have been settled, which is generally before, or soon after he is arrived at thirty years of age, the bent of his mind is compleatly formed, and it is a thousand to one but that after this there will be no material change in his disposition or conduct to the end of his life. If his mind be vitiated then, there is little hope of a change, without a total revolution in his connections and affairs; or unless his mind be roused by some uncommon calamity. In this case, entering, as it were, upon life again, with wisdom bought by experience, his old connections being broken, and new ones to be formed, he may chuse a wiser course, and in time may make it familiar and pleasing to him. But still there is great danger of his relapsing into his former habits, the first opportunity.

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A new set of *principles*, new *views* and *expectations* may be equivalent to such an intire revolution in a man's affairs as was mentioned above. For many persons are so disposed that if they had more *knowledge* they would have more *virtue*. Thus the doctrines of a resurrection, and of a future state of retribution, produced a very great and speedy change in the moral state of the heathen world, at the first promulgation of christianity, affecting the old as well as the young. But when nothing *new* takes place, with respect either to a man's circumstances, or his knowledge, there is but little probability that his conduct will be materially affected by an attention to *truths* and *facts*, to the contemplation of which he has been long accustomed.

3. If bad habits have, unhappily, been formed, and a man thinks he has strength of mind to break through them, he has no other way but resolutely to avoid every associated circumstance belonging to them, whatever

whatever can so much as lead him to *think* of his former vicious pleasures ; particularly the *company* he has formerly kept, and by whose example, insinuations, and solicitations, he has been seduced. A man who confides in his fortitude, and wilfully runs into temptation, is almost sure to be overcome. Our only safety, in these cases, consists in flying from the danger, through a wise distrust of ourselves.

4. We must, also, resolutely do whatever we are convinced is right, whether we can immediately take pleasure in it or not. Let a man invariably do his duty, and he will, in time, find a real satisfaction in it, which will increase, as right conduct grows more habitual ; till, in time, notwithstanding the reluctance with which he entered upon a virtuous course, he will have the most sincere pleasure in it, on its own account. He will love virtue for its own sake, and will not change his course of life, even though it should not be the most advantageous to him for the present.



present. If the most selfish person in the world would make a point of doing generous things, and thus get a custom of befriending and relieving others, till he should look upon it as his indispensable *business*, and his proper *employment*, he would, at length, find satisfaction in it, and would act habitually from the pure principles of benevolence.

5. The contemplation of virtuous characters is a great means of inspiring the mind with a love of virtue. If a man attentively considers the history of a virtuous person, he cannot help entering into, and approving his sentiments, and he will interest himself in his fate. In short, he will feel himself disposed to act the same part in the same circumstances. It is not equally advisable to study the lives, and contemplate the characters of *vicious* persons, with a view to be deterred from the practice of vice, by means of the horror with which it would inspire us. Because, when the mind is familiarized to any thing,

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the horror with which we first viewed it, in a great measure, ceases ; and let a man have been ever so wicked, and his schemes ever so detestable, it is hardly possible (if his character and history have been for a long time the principal object of our attention) not to interest ourselves in his affairs, so as to be pleased with the success of his schemes and stratagems. There will be the more danger of this effect, if such a person have any good qualifications to recommend him ; and no man is so far abandoned to vice, as to be intirely destitute of all amiable and engaging qualities.

Vice joined with wit and humour, or any talent by which a man gives pleasure, or excites admiration is exceedingly dangerous ; more especially if a person of a profligate character be possessed of any real virtues, particularly such as strike the mind with an idea of *dignity* and *generosity*. Thus courage, and humanity too often cover and recommend the most scandalous vices, and even such as really tend to make  
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men cowardly, treacherous, and cruel; and which, at length, extinguish every spark of generosity and goodness in the heart.

6. In order to cultivate the virtues of piety or devotion to the most advantage, it seems necessary that we frequently meditate upon the works, the attributes, and the character of the divine being, and on the benefits which we daily receive from his hands; that we, more especially, reflect upon his universal presence, and providence; till every object, and every occurrence shall introduce the idea of God, as our creator, preserver, benefactor, moral governor, and judge. In this case a regard to him cannot fail habitually to influence our dispositions and conduct, so as to prove the strongest preservative against all vice and wickedness.

7. *Prayer* must be joined to meditation. We must frequently address ourselves to God, expressing our veneration for his  
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character, our gratitude for his favours to us, our humiliation for our offences, our devotedness to his will, our resignation to his providence, and also our *desire* of any thing that he knows to be really good for us. This kind of intercourse with the deity tends greatly to strengthen every proper disposition of mind towards him. Prayer is the universal dictate of nature, not sophisticated by the refinements of philosophy; and, in fact, has been the practice of all mankind.

Besides, though God be so great and good, though he knows all our wants, and is at all times disposed to grant us every proper blessing; yet he who made us, so as that we cannot help having recourse to him as our father, benefactor, and protector, in the same manner as we have recourse to our superiors and benefactors on earth, will no doubt approve, encourage, and condescend to that manner of behaviour and address to him, which the same dispositions and circumstances necessarily



necessarily prompt us to with respect to one another. We may assure ourselves, therefore, that the divine being will *realize* our natural conceptions of him, and reward his humble worshippers. Since we cannot rise to him, and conceive of him in a manner that is strictly agreeable to his nature, and since our intercourse with him is necessary to our virtue and happiness, he will certainly condescend to us; so that we may depend upon finding him to be what the best of his creatures hope, and expect concerning him.

It will not therefore be the same thing, whether we apply to him for the good things we stand in need of, or not. Do not the wisest and best of parents act in the same manner towards their children? It has been the source of great error, and rash judgment concerning the ways of God, to confine ourselves to the consideration of what God is *in himself*, and not to consider what it even becomes his wisdom and goodness, both to represent him-

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self, and actually to be, with *respect to his imperfect creatures*.

Besides, if *good dispositions* be regarded as the only object and end of prayer, it should be considered, that an address to God for what we want is a *test* of good dispositions, as well as a *means of improving* them, supposing it be known to be the will of God, that we should pray to him. But it must be acknowledged that, without revelation, or some express intimation of the will of God, in this respect, the reasonableness and obligation of prayer is not so clearly, though sufficiently evident.

In fact, there are similar reasons for *asking* favours of God, as for *thanking* him for the favours we have received ; since it may be said, that if we be truly grateful, it is quite unnecessary to tell the divine being that we are so ; and thus all intercourse with God by words must be cut off. But certainly there can be no real impropriety in expressing by words whatever  
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ever is the *language of the heart* ; and it can only be an unreasonable and dangerous refinement to distinguish, in this case, between love, gratitude, desire, or any other disposition of mind.

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PART

## P A R T III.

*Of the future expectations of mankind.*

**H**AVING endeavoured to investigate the rules of human duty, from the principles of natural reason, I shall proceed to ascertain, from the same principles, what we have to expect in consequence of our observance, or neglect of them.

The natural rewards of virtue, and the punishments of vice, in this life, have been already mentioned occasionally. I, therefore, propose, in this section, to consider the evidence with which nature furnishes us concerning a *future life*, impartially stating both its strength and its weakness.

I. The



1. The argument that, in general, has the most weight with the wise and good, in favour of a future life, is the promiscuous and unequal distribution of good and evil in this world, in a *general*, indeed, but by no means an *exact* proportion to the degrees of moral worth ; which seems to be inconsistent with the perfect goodness and rectitude of God, as our moral governor. If, together with his attributes of infinite wisdom and power, he be also a lover of virtue, may it not be expected, it is said, that he will reward it more completely than is generally done in this world, especially in the case of a man sacrificing his life to his integrity, when he evidently cuts himself off from all prospect of any reward, except in a future state. It is acknowledged, that in this life we find all the perfection we could wish, considering it as a state of trial and discipline in which to *form virtuous characters*, but in order to complete the scheme, it seems to require another state, to which it may be subservient, and in which the characters

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that are formed here, may have a suitable employment and reward.

2. There is in the human faculties a capacity for *endless improvement*, in a constant advance from sensual to intellectual pleasures, and these growing more complex and refined *ad infinitum*, provided it was not checked by that change in our constitution, which is at present produced by our approach to old age. Our *comprehension of mind*, likewise, increases with the experience of every day ; whereby we are capable of enjoying more of the past and of the future together with the present, without limits, and whereby our happiness is capable of growing continually more stable and more exalted. In comparison of what we are evidently capable of, our present being is but the infancy of man. Here we acquire no more than the rudiments of knowledge and happiness. And can it be consistent with the wisdom of God, to leave his workmanship so unfinished, as it must be, if a final stop

stop be put to all our improvements at death ?

It is true, that we have no faculties but what have some proper exercise in this life, and there is a kind of *redundancy* in all the powers of nature. It is the best provision against a deficiency. Brute creatures too have faculties similar to ours, since they differ from us in *degree* more than in *kind*. But then the difference is so great, especially with respect to some men and some brutes, and man is so evidently the most distinguished of all the creatures of God upon the face of the earth, that there seems to be foundation enough for our expecting a preference in this respect. Or, if the brute creation should be interested in a future life, we shall certainly have more reason to rejoice in it, than to be offended at it ; and many of them seem to have more pain than pleasure in this.

We see, indeed, that many things never actually arrive at what we call their

*perfect state.* For example, few seeds ever become plants, and few plants live to bear fruit; but still *some* of each species come to maturity, and are whatever their nature is capable of being. Allowing, therefore, that, agreeably to this analogy, very few of mankind should arrive at the proper perfection of their natures, we might imagine that, at least, *some* would; and therefore that the wise and the virtuous, if none else, might hope to survive that wreck, that would overwhelm the common mass of their species.

It must be acknowledged that, considering only what we know of the constitution of the body and the mind of man, we see no reason to expect that we shall survive death. The faculties and operations of the mind evidently depend upon the state of the body, and particularly that of the brain. To all appearance, they grow, decay, and perish together. But if the goodness, the wisdom, and the rectitude of the divine being require it,  
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he can easily revive both, or continue the same *consciousness* (which is, in fact, *ourselves*) in some other way,

If we had known nothing of a child but its condition in the womb, we should have pronounced, that its sudden transition into a state so different from it as that which it comes into after birth, would be certain death to it, though, now that we are acquainted with both the states, and can compare them together, we see that the one is preparatory to the other. Equally unfit are we, in this life, to pronounce concerning the real nature of what we call *death*; and when we actually come to live again, we may see an evident, and even a natural connection betwixt this life and the future, and may then understand the use of death, as a passage from the one to the other; just as we now see the necessity of the birth of a child, in order to its transition to our present mode of existence.

Admitting

Admitting that death is an intire cessation of thought, similar to a state of *perfectly* sound sleep, or a stupor, yet, if the purposes of God's providence and moral government require it, he can make us to awake from this sleep at any distance of time ; and then the interval, let it have been ever so long, will appear as nothing to us.

I cannot say that I lay much stress upon the arguments which some have drawn either from the *desire*, or the *belief* of a future life among mankind ; because the former is nothing, in fact, but a desire of happiness, and similar to other desires, which, in a thousand respects, we do not see to be gratified ; and other general opinions may perhaps be mentioned, which, nevertheless, are not true.

The general belief and expectation of a future life is a consideration of importance, but only as a proof of an *early tradition*, which was probably denied from  
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some revelation on that subject, communicated by God to the first parents of mankind.

Upon the whole I cannot help thinking, that there is something in the arguments above recited, which shew that a future life is very agreeable to the appearances of this, though I do not think them so striking, as to have been sufficient, of themselves, to have suggested the first idea of it. And though, if we had never heard of a future life, we might not have expected it; yet now that we have heard of it, we may be sensible that we should do violence to nature, if we should cease to hope for, and believe it.

Admitting that there is another life, taking place either at death, or at some future period, it must be acknowledged, that our condition in it is, at present, in a great measure unknown to us; but since the principal arguments in favour of it are drawn from the consideration of the  
moral

moral government of God, we may depend upon it, that virtue will find an adequate reward in it, and vice its proper punishment. But of what *kind*, it is impossible for us to say.

We seem, however, to have sufficient reason to conclude that, since both the happiness and misery of a future life will be proportioned to the degrees of virtue and vice in this, they must both be *finite*; that is, there must be a continuance of virtue, to secure a continuance of reward, and a continuance in vice to deserve a continuance of punishment.

Although the goodness of God should give a preheminance to *virtue* and the rewards of it, in a future state, yet we do not see that even his *justice*, in any sense of the word, can require him to do the same with respect to vice. Indeed, we must give up all our ideas of *proportion between crimes and punishment*, that is all our ideas of *justice* and *equity*, if we say that a punishment strictly speaking *infinite*,  
either



either in duration or degree, can be incurred by the sin of a *finite creature*, in a *finite time*, especially considering the frailty of human nature, the multiplicity of temptations with which some poor unhappy wretches are beset, and the great disadvantages they labour under through life.

There is, indeed, a sense, and a very alarming one too, in which future punishments, though not strictly speaking infinite, may, nevertheless, be *without end*, and yet be consistent with the perfect rectitude and goodness of God. For the wicked, though confined to a situation which, after some time at least, may not be absolutely, and in itself, painful, may be for ever excluded from a happier situation; to which they see the virtuous advanced. And having this continually in prospect, and knowing that there is an utter impossibility of their ever regaining the rank they have lost by their vices, they may never cease to blame and reproach themselves for their folly, which  
cannot

cannot be recalled, and the effects of which are irreversibile.

If we argue from the analogy of nature, we shall rather conceive, that, since pain, and evils of every kind, are salutary in this life, that they will have the same tendency and operation in a future, and, consequently, that they will be employed to correct, meliorate, and reform those who are exposed to them; so that, after a sufficient time of purification, those who are not made virtuous by the sufferings and discipline of this life, will be recovered to virtue and happiness by the long continuance of unspeakably greater sufferings, and of a much *severer discipline* in the life to come.

Since, however, the longer we live in this life, the more *fixed* are our habits, and dispositions of mind, so that there is an astonishing difference between the *flexibility*, as we may call it, of a child, and that of a grown-man, our constitution af-  
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ter death may be such, as that any change in the temper of our minds will be brought about with much more difficulty, so that a space of time almost incredible to us at present, may be necessary, in order that the sufferings of a future life may have their proper effect, in reforming a person who dies a slave to vicious habits.

The motives to virtue by no means lose any of their real force from the consideration of the *non eternity* of *future punishments*, especially upon the supposition that they will be very intense, and lasting, though not absolutely *without end*. For, in the first place, what is lost with respect to the motive of *terror* and astonishment, is gained by that of *love*, and the persuasion of the greater regard, in the divine being, both to justice and mercy, in *not retaining anger for ever*, on account of the finite offences of his imperfect creatures. Secondly, If the mind of any man be so hardened, that he will not be influenced by the expectation of a very long continu-

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tinuance of punishment, a thousand years for instance, he will not, in fact, be influenced by the expectation of any suffering at all, even that of eternal and infinite suffering. For, in reality, if the fear of the former do not affect him, and stop his career of vice, it must be owing to his not allowing himself time to think and reflect upon the subject. For no man who really *thinks* and *believes*, can be guilty of such extreme folly, as to purchase a momentary gratification at so disproportioned a price; and if a man do *not think* about the matter, but will follow his appetites and passions without any reflection, all difference, in the intensity or duration of punishment, is wholly lost upon him.

In fact, we see that the bulk of professing christians, who, if they were asked, would acknowledge their belief of the eternity of hell torments, are by no means effectually deterred from vice by their belief of it. Rather, the vastness of the thing creates a kind of *secret incredulity*.

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They have a notion that the thing may not, in reality, take place ; and, thinking of no medium, they secretly flatter themselves with the hope of meeting with no punishment at all, and consequently indulge the vain hope of going to heaven, with a state of mind exceedingly unfit for it, rather than suffer a punishment so vastly disproportioned to the degree of their guilt. Whereas, if they had been taught to expect only a *just* and *adequate* punishment, for all their offences here ; and especially such as was necessary to their purification and happiness, their minds might have acquiesced in it, they might have believed it firmly and practically, and such a belief might really have influenced their conduct.

But lastly, it is perhaps more agreeable to the analogy of nature and (this guide only I am now following) to expect, that, as the greater part of natural productions never arrive at their proper maturity, but perish long before they have attained

attained to it, so the bulk of mankind, who never attain to any high degrees of wisdom or virtue, should finally perish also, and be entirely blotted out of the creation, as unworthy to continue in it; while the few who are wise and virtuous, like full ripe fruits, are reserved for future use. And there is something so dreadful in the idea of *annihilation*, as will, perhaps, affect the mind of some persons more than the fear of future torments, with continuance of life, and consequently with secret hope.

These speculations, it must be owned, are, in a great measure, random and vague, but they are the best, as it appears to me, that we can form to ourselves by the light of nature. What revelation teaches us concerning so difficult but important a subject, we shall see in its proper place.

Such are the conclusions which nature teaches or rather which she *asserts* to concerning the nature, and perfections of  
God,

God, the rule of human duty, and the future expectations of mankind. I say *assents to*, because, if we examine the actual state of this kind of knowledge, in any part of the world, not enlightened by revelation, we shall find their ideas of God, of virtue, and of a future state, to have been very lame and imperfect, as will be shewn more particularly when we consider, in the next part of this course, the *want* and the *evidence* of DIVINE REVELATION.

F I N I S.

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